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Explore secret ruins

Follow an old route in Mentougou to the historical remains of past dynasties.



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SantaCons spread spirit

Spread the word! Anyone eager to don the costumes of Santa Claus or his reindeer should register for the next SantaCon.

Watching memories



TV used to air in a 4:3 aspect ratio, but with LCD televisions and digital cable, China is watching the world in 16:9 widescreen.

Painter Zhang Xiaogang relies on this new aspect ratio to shape his experiences. He looks out a train window into a widescreen world where memory is crystal clear and the present is a blur.

Zhang's art serves as a metaphor for China's unprecedented, rapid development where reality and history are being reshaped at stupefying speeds. The speed leaves Zhang, like many people, confused about both. Could the answers be in the past?

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labor can fill
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City mulls new plan to slash traffic next year

By Han Manman

With traffic problems growing worse, the city government is considering new restrictions as traffic pressures become overwhelming.

On Monday, the government published its draft proposal online to solicit public opinion through Sunday. Netizens quickly dubbed it "the toughest policy in history."

Measures being considered included expanding public transportation, curbing the number of privately owned cars and limiting the number of government cars. The plan would also raise parking fees, levy congestion charges and build new underground tunnels.

"Traffic congestion is a reflection of economic development and improved living standards," the city's transportation commission said in its proposal. The document blamed gridlock on population density, a rapid increase in the number of private vehicles, overloaded public transportation and poor traffic management.

The draft listed few specifics about how these changes would be implemented.

The publication killed previous speculation that the government would require car buyers to obtain a parking permit before purchasing a car and limit the number of license plates beginning next year.

Commenting on the government's new move, Liang Qing-huai, a professor of urban rail planning at Beijing Jiaotong University, said controlling the car quantity is the ultimate target.

"Upgrading public transportation requires huge and well-



Local government officials said traffic pressures are becoming overwhelming.

CFP Photo

planned investment. A quick solution is to cap the car count."

"Constructing sufficient public transportation and increasing the cost of owning a private car are ideal for curbing city congestion. Hong Kong also has a large population. If the city can succeed with this model, Beijing can learn from its experience," Liang said.

He also said the proposed cuts to the government's fleet could help ease the city's traffic burdens.

Guo Jifu, director of the Beijing Transportation Development and Research Center, said the measures taken by the Beijing government, no matter whether they limit car purchases or the use of cars, are an effort to curb traffic demands.

"Controlling car purchases ... is a difficult task for both the government and the citizenry to tackle," Guo said.

Gilbert Van Kerckhove, a Belgian business consultant who has lived in Beijing for three decades, lambasted current road and traffic rules for giving too few considerations to pedestrians and bicycles.

"The needs of pedestrians and bicycles are usually neglected with cars encroaching on sidewalks and bicycle lanes, plus the buses and subways are usually overcrowded, making passengers very uncomfortable," he said.

The number of cars registered in Beijing has nearly doubled to 4.7 million this year from 2.6 million in 2005, the transport commission said.

Government researchers said, left unchecked, the average speed of car traffic in the capital could slow to 15 kilometers per hour – the speed of an average bicycle – by 2015.

The congestion problem is not limited to Beijing.

China last year surpassed the US as the biggest car market by annual sales, and the increase in driving has occurred so quickly that many cities like Beijing are grossly unprepared.

Some parts of China already have limits on driving. Shanghai limits the issuance of new license plates. Other locales, such as Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, are considering requiring car buyers to prove they have a parking space before sealing the deal.

Demolition rules up for comment

Local government will not be prohibited from taking administrative action to forcibly demolish citizens' properties, according to the draft of a proposal released Wednesday.

The new law would require all forced home demolitions through the courts.

After almost one year of discussion and revision, the State Council Wednesday started soliciting comment on the second version of its much-discussed draft regulation on expropriation of houses on state-owned land and compensation.

The draft regulation was posted on the website of the Legislative Affairs Office of the State Council. Comments will be open through December 30.

According to the revised draft, local governments cannot force residents to relocate. They must rely on the courts to weigh residents' and developers' concerns.

The forced demolition of houses is a serious issue. Urban development has made forced relocation of households a common phenomenon, often resulting in violent confrontation.

On September 10, three people self-immolated in Jiangxi Province to protest the local government's decision to destroy their home to make way for a bus station.

One died and the other two suffered severe burns. The incident caused eight officials to lose their posts or come under investigation.

Experts believe clashes may be reduced by limiting the local government's administrative power.

The draft is expected to replace the controversial Regulations on Administration of the Housing Demolition and Relocation in Cities, which took effect in 2001. The regulations allowed local governments to demolish the homes of anyone who refused to vacate before a certain date.

The draft details the conditions, due process and compensation to be paid in cases of forced demolition.

It requires compensation to be offered before demolition of houses built on state-owned land, and that compensation be no less than the market price of a similar house.

The draft further requires local governments hold hearings or use other methods to solicit public opinion.

Suggested amendments can be submitted via post, e-mail or online at chinlaw.gov.cn.

(Xinhua)

Inflation Beijingers' top complaint as food costs climb

By Liang Meilan

More than 80 percent of the respondents to a survey by Surv-ery China Mainland Marketing Researching called the ongoing rise in commodity prices their top concern.

The survey found older families were more sensitive about the pressures of rising prices. About 80 percent of the respondents born after 1950 considered the issue a major social concern, 20 percent more than those born in the 1980s.

Complaints came to a head when Master Kong, a popular instant noodle brand, refused to supply its noodle to Carrefour after the French hypermarket rejected its 10 percent increase on the product's price from 2 yuan to 2.2 yuan to cover the rising cost of raw materials.

Hikes in daily necessities have been a headache for many families this year. Rising food costs, one of the top contributors to inflation, have pushed the consumer price index (CPI) to a 28-month high of 5.1.



Master Kong refused to sell Carrefour with noodles after the French hypermarket rejected its 10 percent price hike.

CFP Photo

A survey released Wednesday by the People's Bank of China found that the country's price satisfaction index fell to an 11-year low of 13.8 percent.

According to the survey report published on the bank's website, almost 74 percent of 20,000 respondents considered current prices "too high to be acceptable." Some 45 percent of respondents

said they were willing to invest for the future, and another 38 percent said they would deposit more in the bank.

Only 17 percent planned to increase their consumption.

The pinch is most sharply felt by the needy.

Liu Xiaoyuan, a resident in the city's Huilongguan community, posted on the area's social net-

working website that her monthly food costs doubled this year to 160 yuan. Liu lives on a basic allowance of 430 yuan.

"But 160 yuan will soon be too little. I have been already very careful about my spending. Even though my husband really likes ginger – the price of which has quadrupled – I haven't purchased any for three months," she said.

Well-off families are stocking up on bargain commodities in local supermarkets.

Zhang Xiaoling, a consultant, joked about her obsession with stocking up on products like toilet paper whenever she sees a sale.

To address the social issue and curb inflation, the State Council announced a 16-measure plan intended to stabilize commodity prices on November 20.

The plan focused on enhancing agricultural development, reducing the costs of subsidiary agricultural products, coordinating transportation of coal, oil and gas and giving temporary subsidies to low-income residents.

Officials fall for ignoring enslavement of the disabled

By Han Manman

Five government officials were sacked or warned Wednesday after media exposed a group of mental patients laboring as slaves in a factory located in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

Police apprehended Li Xinglin, who ran the chemical factory in Toksun county, and his son together in Sichuan Province last weekend.

Li was arrested on suspicion of slavery and abuse. As of press time, his wife was also in police custody.

The Toksun government said the factory has been closed and its 12 workers rescued.

Zeng Lingquan, the owner of an unauthorized charitable organization in Sichuan, has also been arrested. Zeng signed a confession stating he sold the patients to the factory.

The local government said it believes Zeng may have sold dozens of other patients to factories throughout the country.

"Since 1996, Zeng Lingquan has sent at least 70 mentally disabled people to work in Beijing, Tianjin and other cities," said Yi Hongqu, an official with the Disabled Person's Association of Quxian County, citing Zeng's confession.

Earlier reports said the 12 workers put in long hours, suffered regular beatings and were given the same food as dogs.



Two Chinese men at work in the Toksun county factory. They were two of the 12 people sold to it as slaves by an unregistered asylum in Sichuan Province.

CFP Photo

None of those employed were ever paid. Some had been working for up to four years and were beaten when they attempted to flee.

Li Xinglin said he paid Zeng's agency 9,000 yuan for the delivery of five of the workers and an additional 300 yuan per worker per month.

His factory is not the first exposed to be using ill people as slaves.

Media have reported sev-

eral other cases of forced labor since the government pledged to crack down on the practice after a 2007 scandal involving more than 1,000 beggars and mentally disabled people found working at a brick kiln in a Shanxi Province.

"The country encourages and subsidizes factories and companies that employ disabled people. However, the case is totally different since they were forced to work and

abused," said Meng Weina, the founder of Hui Ling Community Center for the Mentality Disabled, a non-governmental organization that aids people with learning disabilities.

"To see this exposed time and again is infuriating," Meng said. The recurring tragedies show the dire conditions faced by mentally disabled people throughout the nation, he said.

"They have talked about

stopping this for many years. The government needs to step up and take some real action. The police don't investigate reports unless they are filed by the abused worker himself, and apparently these mentally disabled people are unable to report such reports," Meng said.

Bai Li, a law professor at Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences, said the case revealed just how little supervision the government engages in to prevent slavery and how little is done nationally to aid those with mental disabilities.

While the central government has passed many regulations intended to protect such people, the wording is vague and too general to enforce, she said.

The government-established social shelters, for example, only to aid homeless beggars in the city. However, these are off limits to disabled persons living in the countryside or whose families cannot afford to pay for the related help and protection.

Bai called on the government to pass meaningful regulation to protect people with mental disabilities - regulations that can be enforced.

"Only by stepping up, passing good laws and seeing that they are enforced will such exploitative tragedies be prevented," Bai said.

China becoming new capital of skyscrapers

By Han Manman

The new skyscraper in Wuhan, on track to become the world's third tallest, is more than China's next record-setting building. When completed, more than a third of the world's tallest buildings will be located in the country.

Construction on Wuhan Greenland Center in Wuhan, Hubei Province began last Wednesday.

The 606-meter building, planned to be completed in five years, will only be dwarfed by the 632-meter Shanghai Tower, scheduled to be completed in 2014, and the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, the world's tallest skyscraper at 828 meters.

The skyscraper will cost 30 billion yuan and provide more than 3 million square meters of floor space with a five-star hotel and luxury apartments, as well as Grade-A offices and upscale retail outlets.

This program is part of an effort to transform Wuhan into a major international city, said Yang Song, deputy party secretary of Hubei Province.

While other skyscrapers in Chicago, Moscow and Dubai are on hold due to economic crisis, skyscraper construction has continued in China.

The country has six of the world's 15 tallest buildings, compared with three in the US, the birthplace of the skyscraper, and it is constructing more at a furious pace.

The huge demand in China has attracted many Western skyscraper architects looking for opportunity.

"There are cities in China that most Western people have never heard of that have bigger populations and more tall buildings than half the prominent cities in the US," AP reported, quoting Antony Wood, executive director of the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago.

The country is leading a wave of skyscraper building in developing countries that is shifting the field's center of gravity away from the US and Europe, Wood said.

Wuhan's move prompted discussion online. While supporters said the project will become Wuhan's landmark and a good way to attract investment, opponents said its enormous costs could spread from the local economy to the natural environment.

"Official statistics show the GDP

of Wuhan in 2009 reached a new high of 450 billion yuan, which is only enough to construct 15 such towers," said a netizen named Chen Xiaosong.

"It's as if China is hosting a skyscraper contest, and big cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Wuhan all want the tallest building to end up on their turf," Chen said.

"I suspect these cities' love of high-rise buildings is all about face," another netizen named Xu Miao said. "Once they have a landmark or break a record, the local government and the developer will stop caring."

"Governments are encouraging these iconic buildings in order to send a message to the outside world that it's to pay attention to the city and invest in it," said Zeng Guoan, a professor at Wuhan University of Economics and Management.

"But it takes more than a skyscraper or a record to attract investment," he said.

Zeng said the age of skyscrapers has already passed in most of the world. Developed cities are finding more economical and environmentally-friendly ways to promote their image.

Sperm bank targets students as donators

By Li Zhixin

Many university bulletin boards are seeing a post calling on students to become sperm donors.

The recruitment drive was organized by Beijing Human Sperm Bank. According to the bank, the sperm will be used for scientific research and to fertilize eggs in couples where the man is infertile.

Students must be free of hereditary disease and at least 22 years old. Donors will be paid 3,000 yuan after completing all procedures.

"I am opposed to sperm donation," said Zhang Tianjian, a student at Communication University of China. "What if your son or daughter ended up getting married to someone who was also your descendant? I couldn't accept that."

But science students were more open-minded.

"It's just like blood donation, to some extent," said

Yan Fei, a student at Beijing Medical University. "Although it may clash with traditional thinking, we can't say there isn't a need."

Liang Xiaowei, deputy director of the bank, said the bank has seen few donors since its establishment at the end of 2005: more than 80 percent have been university students.

"Given their generally good physical health, good educational background and living environment, they can supply better sperm," she said.

The full donation procedure takes nearly a year to complete, so aside from university students, few willing donors have sufficient time, she said.

"Although many students are hesitant about donation at the beginning, most accept it after learning the reasonable purposes of sperm use and our guaranteed confidentiality," she said.

Flooded with alien labor

Worker shortage attracts illegal immigrants

By Huang Daohen

They pay human traffickers or sneak by themselves across the border. They come without proper work permits, hoping to find higher wages and better support their families.

Familiar as it sounds, this story is not from the US or Europe: it is from China.

Despite being the world's most populous country, the nation faces a labor shortage: tens of thousands of laborers from Southeast Asia are looking to fill vacancies as they cross the borders to work illegally in the Yangtze River Delta and Pearl River Delta regions.

Illegal immigrants are helping fill the labor market's demands.

Chen Yicai/CFP Photos



Foreign colleagues

Wang Jianguo never thought he would have the chance to work with a bunch of foreigners every day. But these foreigners may not have been the ones he had in mind.

Now in his early 20s, Wang is a local employee at a textile factory in Shaoxing, Zhejiang Province: China's capital of textiles.

He began work shortly after graduating from high school and rarely traveled outside Shaoxing. To him, foreigners were a mystery.

"It's the first time I've heard of foreigners coming to work here," Wang said.

His new migrant peers come from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

"Most of them don't understand Chinese, nor do they speak Chinese or English," Wang said. In their daily work, they communicate only through simple hand gestures.

There are about 30 Vietnamese workers in Wang's factory. Although the factory has more than 200 employees, these foreign workers rarely talk with their Chinese counterparts. "They live in their own tribe," Wang said.

The Vietnamese group came under spotlight when local police launched a campaign to crack down on illegal employment. Local media reported that the Shaoxing police netted 154 illegal migrants this year.

"We like it here in China," Ruan Chunhua, an illegal worker, told Shaoxing media. In China, she can earn about 1,000 yuan or



Local employers in Guangxi hire Vietnamese workers at the docks.

more with free room and board: the same work in her hometown pays only 400 yuan.

Ruan and the others are now being deported.

During her several months in Shaoxing, Ruan managed to save 2,000 yuan after sending money to her family each month. Those savings are equal to a half-year's pay in Vietnam.

She is, understandably, devastated that she has to leave.

Trafficking business

Ruan is only one of thousands of illegal foreign workers seeking their dreams in China. Attracted by the higher wages offered by factory owners in eastern cities, illegal foreign

workers have become a business, said Liu Qian, a senior journalist with the Guangdong-based *Nanfang Daily*.

Liu recently investigated Guangzhou's illegal migrants from China's southeastern neighbors. Most from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia were illegal migrants, others were overstaying their visas, she said.

Liu said it is very easy for people from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to get into China due to the long border and established smuggling routes.

Though some migrants cross alone in a remote area, most pay a snakehead – a human trafficker – to sneak them past the border guards.

Liu said migrants pay about 500 yuan per person to the snakehead. The traffickers take the migrants in groups of 30 on a two-day and two-night trek to the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, where they are routed on to Guangdong and other cities.

After becoming familiar with life in China, most illegal migrants encourage their friends and relatives to follow them, Liu said.

The number of illegal aliens grows exponentially. Statistics from the Guangxi authorities show that last year police detained 1,820 illegal migrants, stopped 4,839 people from crossing the border and deported 2,218 migrants who had no work visas.

Desperate for cheaper labor

But the Vietnamese workers will have ever more incentive to come as the country runs short of low-cost labor.

"This is a normal economic phenomenon," said Zhao Xiao, a local economics professor. China should have an endless supply of cheap labor considering the large population, but rapid urbanization has raised workers' expectations as more seek higher wages in the city.

"This raises labor costs. Small manufacturers don't really need skilled workers, so they will often take a cheaper foreigner – illegal or not," Zhao said.

Zhao compared it to the motivations of Chinese people who choose to enter the US illegally to seek better lives.

Yang Jiecheng, manager of the textile mill where Wang Jianguo works, agrees with Zhao. Yang said he was unable to recruit enough domestic workers for this year's Christmas rush.

Workers from Vietnam and Cambodia come cheap and are hard working and obedient. Yang said many factories prefer to hire them, ignoring their illegal status.

"The market is very competitive and our profits have been very low. If the state would permit it, I would love to have Vietnamese workers at my mill," Yang said.

Legal concerns

The Employment Regulations of Foreigners in China stipulate that foreign workers must have both a work permit and a work visa to work legally in China. But Zhao Xiao said many migrants have only casual employment agreements and are terminated without warning.

The regulations also say anyone who illegally employs a foreign worker will be subject to a fine of 5,000 to 50,000 yuan and ordered to cover the cost of deportation.

But Zhao said the fine is paltry compared to the huge profits these workers generate, and are not enough to stop illegal migration.

Zhao said the government will have to work with neighboring countries to develop a more convenient and legal process for foreigners to work and live in China.

Until then, the snakeheads can expect steady business.

Small manufacturers don't really need skilled workers, so they will often take a cheaper foreigner – illegal or not.

Inflation challenge

Leaders vow to stabilize prices at annual economic conference

Stable, healthy economic development next year

China will enhance and improve macro-economic regulation to ensure stable and healthy economic development next year, said a statement released last Sunday after the annual Central Economic Work Conference.

Next year's macro-regulation should basically be proactive, stable, prudent and flexible, the statement said.

The focus will be better handling of the relationship between stable and relatively fast economic development, economic restructuring and inflation expectations in an active and stable way, it said.

Participants at the three-day conference, one of the nation's most important economic-policy-making events, agreed to exert more effort to keep prices stable next year.

They also agreed to accelerate the strategic transformation of the economic development pattern in order to make economic development more coordinated, sustainable and reliant on the domestic economy.

China's economy grew 9.6 percent year on year in the third quarter this year, slowing from the 10.3 percent increase in the second quarter and 11.9 percent surge in the first quarter.

Inflation rose to a 28-month high of 5.1 percent in November, as bank lending looked certain to exceed the 7.5-trillion-yuan full-year target the government set at the start of the year.

Similarly, growth in the broad money supply (M2) – cash in circulation and all deposits – will surpass the government's full-year target of 17 percent.

Moreover, the US Federal Reserve's second round of quantitative easing has increased the risk of imported inflation.

To curb inflation and soak up excessive liquidity, the country's central bank has raised banks' reserve requirement ratio six times this year. It also lifted the benchmark lending and deposit rates on October 20, the first such move in nearly three years.

The meeting reaffirmed the need to boost farm produce supply through the development of modern agriculture in 2011, and clamp down on price speculation, which is largely blamed for the rapid increase of prices.

The statement said the country will mainly employ economic and legal means, with administrative measures used when necessary, to keep the overall prices "basically stable."

On December 3, the government said it will shift its monetary policy stance in 2011 to "prudent" from "relatively loose."

"Credit should go to the real economy, especially the agricultural sector and small businesses," the statement said.

The meeting reaffirmed the continuation of the government's proactive fiscal policy.

The Central Economic Work Conference was held this past weekend in Beijing, during which the central government outlined next year's economic policy.

The three-day conference, which was attended by President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao, is one of the most important economic policy-making events in the country.

One of the issues was inflation, which rose to a 28-month high of 5.1 percent in November when the government ended its loose monetary policy.



Shoppers on an escalator in a Beijing Mall on Monday. The government recently announced it will tighten monetary policy next year.

Nelson Ching/Getty Image/CFP Photo

Global impact

Ways inflation in China can affect the US

Is inflation in China a relevant factor for the US economy and financial markets? James Kostohryz, head of international investments for major investment banks in Rio de Janeiro and New York, has made a short list of the ways higher inflation in China can affect the US.

1. Moderately higher inflation in the US

Wholesale price and wage inflation in China will raise the cost of Chinese imports for Americans. The business model of most Chinese businesses is

to crank out massive volume at razor-thin margins. Therefore, Chinese producers won't be able to absorb the rise in costs within China. These costs will be passed on in the final price of Chinese goods and therefore this will put some upward pressure on US inflation as measured by consumer prices.

2. Moderately higher US competitiveness

The rise in Chinese wholesale and wage costs will increase the price competitiveness of US products relative to that of Chi-

nese imports, alleviating some of the pressure on some US producers and workers. This has a stimulative effect on the US economy, profits and employment.

3. Real exchange rate depreciation of US dollar

The competitive gains referred to above will occur only to the extent that Chinese inflation is greater than inflation in the US. When inflation in China is greater than in the US there is an adjustment in what is referred to as the real exchange rate.

4. Destabilize global financial markets

Perhaps the greatest impacts on the US and global economies that could result from accelerating inflation in China are those that could flow from associated financial markets' instability.

All potential "solutions" to the Chinese inflation problem come with serious associated potential costs and risks. For example, raising interest rates could devastate the real estate industry and other sectors that have become addicted to cheap credit in China.

The third eye

Inflation reversible but warning signal

A Merrill Lynch economist said on Tuesday that China's inflation is reversible but clearly sending a warning signal to avoid over-heating risk.

"Most inflation so far we see in China is food, which is reversible to get better crops next season," Ethan Harris, head of the Developed Economics Research in Bank of America Merrill Lynch Global Research, said at a press conference.

"However, it was clearly a warning signal here that we need ongoing tightening policy even as the Fed and ECB (European Central Bank) sit here on hold," he said.

Regarding the cause and impact of China's inflation, Alberto Ades, co-head of Global Emerging Markets Fixed Income Strategy and Economics of Bank of America Merrill Lynch Global Research, said it was mostly

driven by food and vegetables.

"We still see it will last for the next few months," Ades said. "China's central bank has raised banks' required reserve ratio to tackle inflation, that's the right thing to do."

After China's most recent CPI reached 5.1 percent, the highest level in 28 months, China's central bank decided to raise commercial banks' RRR (required reserve ratio) by 0.5 percent, the

third time in a month.

"I don't think it's necessarily a bad thing that China is tightening its monetary policy," said Harris.

"Although tightening policy in China might lead to some slowdown, it will not be significant," Ades said. "We have growth in China this year at 10.3 percent. We will see China's growth slow to 9.1 percent next year."

(Agencies)

Top firms pick US to go public

US investors crazy for Internet giants' IPOs

By Chu Meng

Two Chinese Internet companies took the US initial public offerings (IPO) market by storm November 9.

On its first day, video sharing website Youku climbed 161 percent from its IPO price of \$12.80. It was the fastest-growing IPO in the US since Baidu's 354 percent jump in 2005. Online bookseller Dangdang climbed an impressive 87 percent from its starting \$16.

Only a day before, PolyBona Films Group, the country's biggest private entertainment group, went public on the NASDAQ, pitting it directly against Hollywood.

The remarkable performance of these companies on the US stock market has spread to several other China-related stocks. But why are the country's most promising companies skipping the domestic A-shares to go abroad? Perhaps more curiously, why are American investors so keen on unknown foreign groups?



Victor Koo, chief executive officer of Youku, says Youku's success is due to more than a boom.

Jin Lee/Getty Images/CFP Photo

Since last Wednesday, every major US financial publication has been buzzing about "China madness" in the stock market.

Small wonder.

The online edition of the *Wall Street Journal* noted Thursday that during the week, six of the total 10 IPOs were from China, with a seventh from Taiwan. In one week, the number of Chinese companies getting listed in the US set new records.

New generation goes abroad

In its year-end summary, Bloomberg said four of the top 10 IPOs in the US were from China.

Recent and upcoming IPOs by Chinese companies in the US include big-name companies like Dangdang, Youku, PolyBona, Skye and United Tinto Group.

"Compared with the first batch of Chinese enterprisers who rushed to lead their companies to overseas stock markets five years ago, the new generation of Chinese enterprises today is more rational and confident," Wei Xingyun, a computer analyst at Guotai Junan Securities, said.

"The best news is we have a lot more money," Dangdang's co-founder Yu Yu said in a webcast on Sina.com the day of the IPO. "With the money, we can lead

online sales. We can be well prepared to guarantee stable low prices no matter what kinds of battles are to come."

More and more people are transforming from Internet users to Internet shoppers, a trend Dangdang is hoping to cash in on.

Dangdang and Youku dominate their respective markets. Both posted capital gains consistently throughout the global economic downturn.

With more people in the country gaining Internet access each day, their potential for growth remains enormous.

Skipping the A-shares

Wei said US investor confidence in "China-related" stocks is due to a similarity in business modes. Prior to their IPOs, investors began comparing China's giants to more established US companies like YouTube and Amazon.

A more likely culprit is a widespread disillusionment in US companies after years of economic devastation.

A total 39 Chinese companies made forays into the US IPO market this year. More and more small- and medium-size Chinese companies, especially those from boom industries, are reluctant to go public in China.

"It's important to understand that for Chinese compa-

nies, listing in the US stock market is not their first choice," said Xin Wei Lee, a research and equity analyst at China Investing, and Beijing-based analyst of US stock markets.



Youku's shares jumped 88 percent after its US IPO.

Mai Tian/IC Photo

Unlike in the US, getting listed in China is a mind-boggling task. There is a queue of companies waiting to list on the domestic exchange, and every one has so-called "connections" with a higher authority.

"The owners of these Chinese companies have complained privately about the cost, time and

uncertainty of the IPO process in China," he said.

Many companies getting listed in the US were already rejected in China, he said.

"One of the hardest parts of [getting listed in China] is finding enough people to support the company. If the business is a state owned enterprise (SOE), then you get the red carpet treatment. For 99 percent of Chinese business owners, they just don't have the political connections to pull it off," he said.

Something irrational

But the most obvious reason Chinese companies are going to the US for their IPOs is to get money fast.

Bloomberg reported that since the end of October, Chinese companies have been behind 35 percent of IPOs on US exchanges. They have had an average return of 30 percent, while IPOs overall have returned about 19 percent.

While US investors are keen on these stocks at the moment, Guan Bihong from the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in the US wrote in his blog that "something irrational is behind the surge in shares prices."

Investors, he said, are intoxicated by China's Internet market.

But this incredible enthusiasm for companies without a

proven profit model is the recipe for a bubble: a sound concept does not necessarily create cash.

"Chinese companies are still learning the basics of creating a rational and transparent profit model. Many don't even know how to publish a convincing annual profit announcement," he said.

To get a real foothold in the US capital market, the companies have to exercise good business judgment and run their operations well.

"Otherwise, the IPO might fail," he said.

China-based online retailer Mecox Lane went public in October, but it has since been sued by investors three times for giving false and misleading statements. Its shares plummeted, and today it trades for less than 40 percent of its IPO.

Dangdang's CEO Li Guoqing told Xinhua News Agency on Monday that he took the capital market's support as a recognition of the strength of China's e-commerce.

"The frenzy over Dangdang is because of our fast development and profitability," Li said.

"Economic development in China plays a role in it, of course, by showing our market potential. We certainly have a long way to go and we have much to do to get there."

Sea burial gaining popularity despite opposition

Prostitutes or fallen women?

By Zhao Hongyi

The Chinese central government appealed for the public to give more respect to prostitutes and stop discriminating against and abusing them.

Liu Shaowu, director of public security from the Ministry of Public Security, called for respect last Thursday at a press conference related to the nationwide crackdown on the sex industry.

"They used to be called prostitutes, but we should call them 'fallen women,'" Liu said.

China began cracking down on the industry this month. During the campaign, many abuses against prostitutes were exposed by the media.

In Henan Province, a group of police officers caught prostitutes and their clients and forced them to be photographed naked by local media.

In Dongguan, Guangdong Province, prostitutes caught by police were paraded. In Kunming, Yunnan Province, police forced prostitutes to kneel on the street. In Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province local police sent notices to the families of prostitutes in an attempt to shame them.

Prostitution is illegal in China, but brothels are still widespread. They are usually disguised as saunas and massage parlors. In the small cities and counties, the sex industry is growing, with many prostitutes soliciting clients on the streets.

It's estimated that the sex industry takes in tens of billions of yuan in annual revenue, according to sources from the ministry.

Liu's appeal evoked a hot debate over how prostitutes should be viewed.

"Adjusting our attitudes toward prostitutes is important," a commentator said in *Beijing Youth Daily*, "but helping them find better ways to make a living is even more important."

Comment

Prostitutes deserve leniency

Most prostitutes are more ethical than their clients, many of whom are government officials or rich people. The officials use their public power to benefit themselves and purchase sex, charging it to their accounts. The rich get their money from bribes and flattery.

— Shi Shusi, news observer and senior editor, Workers Daily

Purchasers should be punished

Many countries go after those who purchase sex instead of the "fallen women." We should do more to help prostitutes. If they don't accept our help, that's their own choice.

— Wang Jun, professor of social studies, Peking University

Learn from Chairman Mao!

In 1950, soon after the People's Republic was founded, the people's governments closed all brothels throughout the country and prostitutes were given new jobs by the government. That's one of the reasons why Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party are still beloved and trusted by the Chinese today.

— Yang Jinwen, retiree

It's better to settle them down

In Western countries, we use "sex workers" to describe prostitutes. I know that in Chinese, it's better to avoid the word "sex" and use terms like "fallen women." Whatever you call them, the better way to protect these people is to help them find a job, own a business or any other way to make a living. It's much more effective and useful than changing the words used to describe them!

— Johan Steinberg, Norwegian student



After 20 years, sea burial has gained a pleasure of acceptance in China.

CFP Photo

By Zhang Dongya

Last Sunday, Shanghai held a commemorative ceremony at Binhai Park for sea burials, which began 20 years ago.

The first sea burial ceremony was in 1991, when the ashes of 113 deceased were spread into the sea. During the past two decades, this practice has gained increasing acceptance. Last year, more than 2,000 people chose to be buried at sea.

Shanghai has held 162 sea burial ceremonies. The bones and ashes of more than 21,000 deceased have been scattered in the ocean, saving more than four hectares of land in the city.

But more than 80 percent of people still prefer a traditional burial.

Most worry that their descendants will not have a physical place to mourn them if their ashes are in the ocean. In 2004, a sea burial commemorative garden was built in Binhai Park to solve the problem.

A commemorative wall, with the deceased's engraving, was erected as a place for people to mourn the dead. Since

2008, a public memorial ceremony has been held at the garden every Tomb Sweeping Day. Citizens are encouraged to mourn the deceased by placing flowers instead of traditional offerings.

Shanghai Feisi Sea Burial Service Center is the only company that provides sea burial service in the city. The company said sea burial is a seasonal activity that only happens six months out of the year: from March to June and from October to December.

Each time, 70 to 80 people participate in the ceremony, which involves taking a ship out to sea. It usually takes about four hours and costs 150 yuan per person on board.

Many signed up to have a sea burial for a relative who died 10 to 20 years prior. Among the reasons they choose a sea burial is because it is economical and environmentally friendly.

"The schedule is tight. People who sign up now have to wait until next May in Longhua Funeral Parlor, and next June in Baoxing Funeral Parlor," a Feisi employee said.

The tight schedule is due to a shortage of ships, which is becoming the bottleneck of the service's development. Most ships do not offer the sea burial service because they consider it bad luck.

Statistics show that 100,000 people die in Shanghai each year. The local government has said the city will have no spare land to bury the dead after 10 years.

To ease the pressure, the Shanghai Bureau of Civil Affairs said it would explore a gradual way to promote sea burial. In addition, the Shanghai government decided to issue memorial certificates to families who choose sea burial.

The concept has been slowly catching on in cities as well.

Qingdao, Shandong Province first started sea burials 20 years ago as well. In October, the city began trying to halt cemetery expansion.

In Beijing, those with local hukou can have two family members board ships for free, but non-residents will be billed 380 yuan per person. The sea burial takes place in Tanggu in Tianjin.

Comment

Tradition goes first

I learned some leaders like Deng Xiaoping had their ashes scattered into the sea. Although I'm not old, I still prefer to comply with tradition. In China, it's an important thing to bury the dead, which shows respect. I was born in Henan Province, which adheres closely to traditional customs, so I don't think I can accept sea burial.

— Angel Lou, 30, office worker in Shanghai

Leaders take the lead

In my opinion, since traditional burials still exist, we need some compelling reason to use sea burial. Chinese people value leaders, so I suggest governors take the lead in sea burial.

Saving the land is reasonable, but

people feel uncomfortable with the idea of not being buried in the land after death.

I am a native Shanghaiese and I have deep connections to the sea. But that's not enough reason to persuade me to take sea burial.

I am also fond of West Lake in Hangzhou, but if I scattered the ashes of my relatives there, how would I feel when I visit the lake?

— Edward Chang, 40, Shanghai citizen

Worries about sea burial

"To die without a burial place" is a bad curse to the Chinese, so most elders prefer to have their bones buried in the land. Land is considered the place to be laid to rest. The sea gives a feeling of drifting around without a desti-

nation — hardly acceptable to elders.

Although sea burials are supposedly environmentally friendly, I worry that the mass dumping of bones and ashes may contaminate the water, especially in cases where the deceased died because of an infectious disease.

— Zhang Yun, 28, salesman

Getting practical

Graveyard fees are getting more and more expensive. People need to do things according to their ability, and respecting the dead should not be at the cost of the living running out of money. Also, with the fast changes today, you always worry that cemeteries might get replaced by a property developer's next big idea.

— Millan, netizen at sohu.com

Israeli filmmaker touches nerve

By He Jianwei

Famous for discussing war and violence in his films, Israeli director Amos Gitai presented 13 of his movies for screening at the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art and the French Culture Center last weekend.

The screening included his early films banned in Israel in the 1980s and award-winning films such as *Free Zone*, starring Israeli-American Natalie Portman.

Born in 1950 in Haifa, Gitai has become Israel's most prolific director. He has made more than 40 films and documentaries. Most of his works explore the conflicts between Israel and Palestine.

His decision to become a filmmaker was influenced by Israel's history of warfare.

Gitai was a college student in architecture when the 1973 Yom Kippur War began. Like

many people of his generation, he was drawn into the war.

A few days later, he found himself in a helicopter rescue team to retrieve the killed and wounded.

One day, as his unit was flying over the Golan, a Syrian missile shot down the helicopter he was sitting in.

That was the day he decided he no longer wanted to study architecture. Gitai picked up his Super 8 camera – a birthday present from his mother – and began documenting the war.

In the late 1970s and early '80s, Gitai produced a series of documentaries for Israeli TV. He left Israel for France in 1983 because some of his films had been banned for their pro-Arab stance.

Although he returned to college to get a Ph.D in architecture from the University of

California, Berkeley in 1986, he did not want to be an architect like his father.

He regarded the Yom Kippur War as a decisive turning point in his life. "It made Israel end a period of what some people like to call a kind of age of innocence. It also opened my life of filmmaking, trying to touch a nerve of the country," Gitai said.

Gitai said his life in Israel forced him to deal with themes of war and violence. "Most Israeli filmmakers discuss this because it is our experience. You think you will conduct a normal life, but life throws you into the war," he said.

But he did not know filmmaking would be his career until he attended lectures by American director Francis Ford Coppola, who directed *The Godfather* series.

"It was just a coincidence when I walked into Coppola's lecture. He was a big director at that time and I was nobody," Gitai said.

In the mid-'90s, Gitai returned to Israel, marking the beginning of a new creative period, producing 10 documentaries and features over the next 10 years, including the 1997 *War Memories* wherein he comes to terms with his traumatic experiences in the Yom Kippur War.

Gitai's next film, *Shanghai, I Love You*, will be shown next year as part of Emmanuel Benhiy's Cities of Love series.

Gitai served as a judge in June for the 13th Shanghai International Film Festival and found people's industriousness gave the city an energy that was absent from many other places.



Amos Gitai

Photo provided by Amos Gitai

'Red' foreigner urges Chinese youth to value history

By Li Zhixin

Mark Levine, an American famous for singing patriotic Chinese songs in China for the past three years, recently initiated a project to find stories about foreigners who lived in China between 1920 and 1960 and introduce their stories to

young locals.

"They were mainly teachers, translators, doctors, journalists and artists, but they have one thing in common: they devoted their lives to supporting the national liberation of Chinese people and the construction of a new China," he said.

Among the people profiled are international correspondent Israel Epstein, who reported about China his entire life; David and Isabel Crook, who were foreign language teachers; and Erwin Engst and Joan Hinton, engineers who devoted themselves to developing Chi-

na's agriculture.

As most of these people have passed away, Levine, 62, interviewed their descendants.

Levine, who came to China in 2005, said during his three years of performing he discovered that young people are becoming less interested in the story of the

revolution. They express interest in him only because he's a foreigner singing revolutionary songs. "Many young people think history is boring, they only care about the present and future," he said. "They are forgetting the value of learning from the past."

Levine, also a full-time English teacher at Minzu University of China, decided to appeal to young people to carry forward the revolutionary spirit.

"The response is really good," he said. "Many students were stunned that so many foreigners helped build New China in that special historical period."

Levine said he is an advocate of many of Mao Zedong's ideas, which he was first exposed to in the 1970s. When asked what Mao might say if he were alive today, Levine quoted from Mao himself: "Put aside the fear, dare to struggle, dare to win"; 'A single spark can start a prairie fire'; and 'Serve the people' are just as applicable today as they were before."

Levine also credited his colleagues and students at Minzu University, where students and teachers represent all 56 of China's ethnic groups, with helping him understand red culture. His "Minzu Daxue Song" tells of being a teacher at Minzu, where he observes that all can work together while demonstrating pride of their own culture.

"Red culture brings them together. Although different, all can get along," he said.



Mark Levine

Photo provided by Mark Levine

Proposed changes in UK visa law may hit Chinese students hard

By Li Zhixin

The British Home Office intends to tighten visa regulations for international students as a response to high domestic unemployment. As a result, many Chinese students in the UK fear they may be forced to leave the country if the visa policy changes take effect next year.

The regulations would cancel the Post Study Work (PSW) policy, which grants foreign graduates of specified courses up to two years of free access to the labor market. It also raises the English-language requirement for many foreign appli-

cants from level B1 to B2.

The Home Office said the government wants to ensure the number of international students coming to the UK is in balance with the number leaving. A statement on its website read: "The UK is attracting students who aren't always the brightest and the best in recent years. The government wants to ensure that those who enter on a student visa come here to study, not to work or with a view to settling here."

The Home Office announced it will seek public opinions about the

proposal until January 31.

If the policies are adopted, at least 20,000 Chinese students may have to leave the UK in the coming months as their visas expire, the Beijing-based *Mirror Evening News* reported on Tuesday, quoting sources from the British Council.

However, Sebastian Wood, the British ambassador, doesn't agree with the statement. "This is somewhat misleading," he said at the opening ceremony of the new British visa application center at Beijing Inn in Dongcheng District

on Wednesday. "What I want to stress is that there is no reason to ask them to leave before finishing their study."

He reaffirmed that the British government still encourages talented students to go to the UK to share their high-quality education. "This is our consistent attitude," he said.

He said during the first nine months of the year, more than 42,000 Chinese students were granted British visas. Among them, 85 percent were students pursuing an undergraduate education or above in the UK.

"Students, especially those who study at private colleges at non-degree levels, are probably under great pressure, but they needn't worry about being forced to leave the country as it will still take two to three years before [the policy] is enforced," said Wu Yuanyuan, the British Council's education marketing officer.

According to the British Council, there are about 85,000 Chinese in Britain on student visas. About 20,000 are taking language classes or other courses below the bachelor's degree level.

Norwegian architect shares knowledge about transforming landscapes into buildings

By Chu Meng

International award-winning Norwegian architect Reiulf Ramstad – somewhat of a national treasure – shared his knowledge about integrating living-friendly urban landscapes into the natural environment with Chinese architects in Beijing on Monday.

His visit was supported by *Area* magazine and the Norwegian embassy in Beijing. The visit was also a part of the theme event "Conversation series with Frank Gehry Architect," held by Swire Properties.

During his one-week stay, he gave a series of lectures called "Architecture and Art" at the Frank Gehry Exhibition Center in Sanlitun Village and the School of Architecture at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, which has strong ties to the Oslo College of Architecture.

Ramstad started his first lecture by reading words from the cover page of his personal website, which summarizes his philosophy of design: "Whatever is iconic must be perfect, whatever is perfect must be simple and what-

ever is simple must be bold."

He opened the Reiulf Ramstad Architects (RRA) firm in Oslo, Norway in 1995. Since then, the firm has received numerous awards for its projects in Norway. Ramstad described their way of architecture as "distinguished by innovative tectonic forms that interpret the spatial continuity between exterior and interior landscapes in new ways."

Ramstad's architects are especially known for their focus on the Norwegian landscape in their works. They have received prizes such as the Norwegian Award for Design Excellence and the European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture.

Ramstad also represented Norway at the Nordic pavilion at the Architectural Biennale in Venice in 2001 and the Norwegian Pavilion at the Shanghai Expo.

Barents Secretariat Tower in Kirkenes, Norway, is an ongoing project of Ramstad's firm, which Ramstad illustrated in the lecture to help explain his philosophy of creating contemporary architecture



Reiulf Ramstad gives a lecture to Chinese architects.

Photo provided by Jiang Ruirui

characterized by clarity of thought.

The tower is projected to be a 16-story wooden cultural center that will surpass the world's current tallest wooden structure in Arkhangelsk, Russia. "Our client, the Norwegian Barents Secretariat, hopes the tower will serve as a physical symbol of their role in the high north, a beacon of knowledge and development," Ramstad said.

Ramstad said his understand-

ing of clarity depends on two things: in-depth analysis and solid decisiveness.

"The first is a matter of method, the second one of mindset," he said.

The Barents Secretariat Tower employs environmentally friendly ideas, as it is being built with recycled materials and uses integrated systems that allow the structure to adapt to different seasons to

achieve carbon neutrality.

"Since every project is regarded as unique, it is necessary to think again and again about the approach, down to the most basic parameters," Ramstad said. "The key notion is that a clear grasp of context must be sought through in-depth analysis. And that process of clarification is a necessary guideline for the kind of focused creativity that good architecture is based on."

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Year-end meet-up for chocolate aficionados

By Liang Meilan

Chocolate has traditionally been a cold-weather confectionary, so what better time than now for a cocoa-themed gathering?

ChocoJing, a chocolate appreciation society initiated by Elyse Ribbons in 2007, is hosting a meet-up next Sunday, December 26, at the grand opening of CC Sweet, a new pastry shop in town. The store has designed chocolate-based cupcakes exclusively for the event.

ChocoJing has organized more than 20 monthly or bimonthly chocolate tasting and making events at venues all over Beijing.

"Each of our events is different based on the type of chocolate that we are working with," said Ribbons, host of CRI's Laowaikandian show, a playwright, actress, director and model from the US.

The most recent event was a three-course chocolate dinner at Flamme at Sanlitun Village, where the chef created a cocoa vinaigrette for the salad, molé sauce for the main and a dessert of chocolate lava cake. Chocolate and wine pairings and hot chocolate tastings are ChocoJing's proper event modes.

Every now and then, it orga-



Members of ChocoJing make truffles at the Fig Tree bakery school.

Photo provided by ChocoJing

nizes chocolate workshops. In March, members spent a night

trying to create their own truffles at the Fig Tree, a pastry school.

"Knowing well that a chocolate DIY event is an ideal way to explore new types of the confection and at the same time relieve pressure, we are planning a future workshop with tea and chocolate," Ribbons said.

At ChocoJing's events, people do more than gorge themselves on chocolate. But Ribbons stressed that these events are not for business networking, so business cards are banned.

"Instead, we make friends, share in exotic and delightful ways of enjoying chocolate, and in general light up the capital with cocoa-infused conversations," she said.

There are currently about 200 registered "ChocoJingers," half-expat and half-local.

Events fill up within days of the announcement, so an RSVP to chocojing@iheartbeijing.com is required.

ChocoJing is an entirely volunteer-run non-profit organization, so a cover charge of around 50 yuan each usually covers expenses for the 60 or so guests. Membership applications can be filled out at iheartbeijing.com.

Those want to provide venues or collaborate in events can also write to ChocoJing.

Santas spread Christmas spirit in town



Photo by Jonah M. Kessel

By Annie Wei

On Saturday, more than 100 locals and foreigners dressed up as Santa Claus and hit the town to spread the holiday spirit in an annual event organized by Beijing SantaCon, a non-profit, non-politi-

cal and non-religious convention.

The event was open to anyone willing to dress as either Santa or one of his reindeers. Participants gave away gifts, sang songs and drank beer.

Two groups started from

pizza shops at Wudaoying and Shuangjing and met up at Tian'anmen Square, the Drum and Bell Tower, Houhai and finally Sanlitun for a bar crawl.

During the route, participants made donations to help

a local school of children of migrant workers.

There are 174 SantaCons in 24 countries. If you are interested in participating in next year's event, register at bjsantacon.com to receive notices in advance.

Event

Community CrossFit exercise

CrossFit is now a world popular workout methodology combining exercises like weightlifting, sprinting and gymnastics. Recently it was introduced in town, and the only venue to do this exercise with a group of people is at the British School of Beijing. All of the movements are scalable based on individual capacity levels.

Where: The British School of Beijing, Shunyi campus, 9 Anhuajie, Shunyi District

When: Every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday

Tel: 13439326611

Cost: Depends on skill level

Learn to ski

Culture Yard, a local cultural event organizer for expats, is assisting people on a full day at the well-known Nanshan ski resort with its professional and multinational team. Meals, transportation, entrance fees, equipment and two hours of training on either skiing or snowboarding will be included.

Where: Nanshan Ski Village, Shengshuitou Village, Henan-zhai Town, Miyun County

When: December 18, 7 am - 6 pm

Tel: 8404 4166

Cost: 500 yuan

Sunday bicycle ride

The Peloton Beijing, a pan-Asian expat bike cycling club, organizes rides every Sunday. Rides regularly start from TREK store in Chaoyang Park at 9 am. Destinations are mostly in various mountains in the outskirts. The distances vary from 50 to 120 kilometers, catering to members with different physical abilities rated level A, B and C. Each trip includes 15 to 30 people.

When: Every Sunday, 9 am - noon

Email:

tomlanhove@gmail.com

Website:

beijing.mongoliproccycling.com

Cost: 200 yuan

Family day

Those who want to spend an artistic weekend with children should attend the family day program organized by Ullens Center Contemporary Art (UCCA) for children ages 4 to 12. It features child-friendly exhibitions, a selection of French short animated films, a children's art workshop and a festive family percussion workshop. Food and beverage will be provided.

Where: UCCA, 4 Jiuxian-qiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: December 18, 10 am - 4 pm

Tel: 8459 9269

Cost: 180 yuan per family

(By Liang Meilan)

Free bilingual first aid manual is available

By Liang Meilan

The Beijing Red Cross released 30,000 copies of the latest edition of *Family First Aid Manual*, written in Chinese and English, on Sunday. They can be picked up around town free of charge.

The first aid handbooks provide step-by-step directions for dealing with critical issues such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and caring for common injuries such as foot fractures.

In addition to medical emergency advice, the manual includes content about prevention of communicable diseases, handling unexpected disasters and preventing bodily assault. There are also tips for preparing a family first aid kit and disaster supply kit.

"These years we've been seeing more and more epidemics and natural disasters, as well as man-made hazards, which are great threats," said Wang Yiping, the manual's executive editor-in-chief. "We should equip ourselves with the knowledge and skills for self-rescue and to help those in need."

The manual was compiled by a group of medical experts from top domestic hospitals such as Peking University First Hospital and foreign-owned hospitals in town.

"The book was translated and proofread by foreign doctors, so the accuracy and readability are ensured," Wang said.

Steps for first aid practices are illustrated with pictures and charts. Detailed, easy-



The Beijing Red Cross gives first aid training to students.

Photo by Huang Zhe/CFP

to-understand pathologies are also included.

For example, in the section about CPR, the manual says that if no CPR is performed, it only takes four to six minutes for a person to become brain dead due to lack of oxygen.

"If timely and correct chest compressions and mouth-to-mouth breathing are applied within three to five minutes, the person's chance of survival is 49 to 75 percent," Wang said.

Laura Ashley, an English teacher from the US, said the

manual is a valuable asset. She plans on showing it to her Chinese housekeeper.

"It also acts like a textbook for me to learn Chinese and for my housekeeper to learn English," she said.

Wang, who is also the chief executive officer at Beijing Red Cross' education center, said that though the manual provides detailed instructions for coping with critical and common emergencies, people should still try to seek hands-on training.

The education center holds

regular first aid training courses all across the city. Institutions or individuals who want to have such training can contact the center by calling 6756 3401. Courses are also open to expats. Different levels of first aid certificates are issued after the training.

In Beijing, one out of four local residents have learned basic first aid. About 564,000 people have received primary first aid certificates after two days of study.

Those who want to get the manual should call the emergency center at 999.

Winter camps of all variety for children

By Zhao Hongyi

Winter camps have become popular in China. Many different schools and institutions organize the camps to give students something to do during their free time.

The camps also aim to teach students life lessons outside the classroom and provide them a broader perspective.

They are also an ideal place for students to engage in Chinese culture and learn more Chinese.

As Spring Festival is from February 3 to 8, most of the camps are scheduled for the week before or after the festival.

Broadway English Theater Winter Camp

Targets students ages 6 to 13. Participants will perform *Treasure Island* in English with poetry, song and dance. Aspiring actors, singers, dancers, acrobats and musicians are welcome.

Broadway English is a variation of Beijing Playhouse's long-running successful kids theater camps. Beijing Playhouse's bilingual crew will use theater to teach English in addition to the usual acting, singing and dancing.

The camp will end with a family performance of *Treasure Island*.

Contact: Chris Verrill



Baseball winter camp in Beijing

CFP Photo

Time: 9 am - 4 pm, February 7-19, 2011

Registration: 2 pm, Saturday, January 15, 2011

Where: No. 4 High School, Ping An Li Community, Xi Huangcheng-gan Beijie, Xicheng District

Email: performance@beijingplayhouse.com

I Love Beijing Winter Camp

International teachers take camp-goers on a tour of Beijing's streets, courtyards, palaces and campuses while teaching students about the city's history and culture. The camp will be split into two groups, with 10 people in each.

Camp 1: January 24-30, 2011; camp 2: February 10-16, 2011

Image Beijing Winter Camp

International teachers will bring the students on a search for "historic Beijing," and try to capture its unique characteristics using cameras. Twenty people per camp.

Camp 1: January 24-28, 2011; camp 2: February 10-14, 2011

Where: 9th floor, D Tower, Beijing International Center, No. 18A, Zhongguancun Nan Dajie, Haidian District

Tel: 6212 5800, ext. 489

Fax: 6216 9600

Beijing Youth Daily Journalism Winter Camp

Beijing Youth Daily, The Mirror and Middle School Times are jointly inviting students to

their journalism winter camp starting January 22, 2011.

The camp will first give students journalism training on January 22-25. The journey starts in the mountainous resorts of Huairou County on the outskirts of Beijing. Students will then fly down to Malaysia and Singapore, interviewing Confucius Institute scholars, local media professionals and Chinese ambassadors in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.

Registration deadline: December 31, 2010

Contact: James Huo

Tel: 6590 2026, 6590 2014

Badminton Winter Camp

This camp has a long history in Beijing. Participants will use the courts in the University of International Business and Economics and Capital Normal University. Trainers will provide junior and senior courses in the morning, with practice and competition in the afternoon.

Camp 1: January 17-28, 2011; camp 2: January 19-28, 2011; camp 3: February 10-17, 2011

Where: Room 516, Minmetals Tower, Bei Sihuan Lu, Chaoyang District

Tel: 6489 3738, 5982 4445

Fax: 5860 3606

ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiyang@ynet.com

I heard a girl was charged 3,900 yuan for sending three micro-blog messages via iPhone in Moscow. Like her, I use a China Unicom SIM card. How can I avoid unnecessary data fees when outside China?

Since the China Unicom roaming charges are extremely high, you should avoid using its data service. The safest way is to turn off all applications like Skype, email, MSN and others that generate large data traffic even when you don't use them. Try buying a local SIM card if you do need to transmit data. If you are going to Japan, Korea or Singapore, you can use a newly designed China Unicom package that charges 150 yuan per month for unlimited data transmission.

I need a new pair of UGG boots, but the ones at Xidan outlet malls, Yashow and Silk Market are all fake. Where can I find real UGGs in town?

Your answer is the UGG store at Solana shopping mall near Chaoyang Park at BS-20, 6 Chaoyang Gongyuan Lu, Chaoyang District. Call them at 5905 6839 for more details.

I am thinking about serving a tofurkey this Christmas. The dish is quite popular in the US, but I didn't realize it was so hard to find in Beijing. Does any market or restaurant offer this?

There are a few restaurants that offer tofurkeys. One worth trying is Vegan Hut, which recently began offering a traditional American buffet (130 yuan) that includes tofurkey. The location is Room 0912, 2/F, Building 9, Jianwai SOHO, 35 Dong Sanhuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District. Call at 5869 9856 for more information.

My family is visiting me during Spring Festival and they want to take a train down south. Is it easy to get train tickets, and how congested will it be?

The Spring Festival travel season starts January 19 and will last around 40 days. The number of passengers during chunyun hit 2.26 billion in 2008. You can give it a try if you are determined, but *Beijing Today* recommends taking a plane.

(By Liang Meilan)

Falling into memor

By He Jianwei

Memories are the topic of Zhang Xiaogang's paintings.

In the past 20 years, Zhang has not only developed his art through constant exploration of historical and memorial themes, but also expressed his personal life.

At Record, his solo exhibition last September, Zhang dredged his memories to recreate life as it was in the 1980s and 1990s through his sculptures, installations and steel-plate paintings.

In his latest exhibition at Today Art Museum, he presents new works reflecting further on his personal life.

Zhang Xiaogang in his studio



Train Window - The Lonely Violin

The main hall of Today Art Museum is now home to a cozy bed and quilt illuminated by a lone dim bulb.

The installation is intended to lure in visitors to read a few paragraphs written by the artist last Tuesday about his thoughts on life during the past year.

Titled 16:9, the exhibition shows 17 pieces of works split into two series: "Heaven" and "Train Window."

Born in Kunming, Yunnan Province, in 1958, Zhang made his fame in the 1990s with paintings reflecting on a generational memory of the 1960s and 1970s in his oil-based Bloodline series. Bloodline people have big heads, pale eyes and subtle changes in hairstyle with stifled emotions.

But in his new works, Zhang deals with more personal memories.

"As I get older, I feel less that art is a career: it's

my lifelong pursuit. I'm satisfied as long as I can take it another step each year," Zhang said last Wednesday at the opening.

Zhang named his exhibition the aspect ratio now used in TV and computer broadcasts.

"We used to watch TV in a 4:3 [aspect ratio], but more and more families have upgraded their TVs to new widescreen models," he said. "This is the way we see the world today, the visual angel and position. We increasingly rely on this ratio to shape the way we perceive things."

When Zhang paints, he incorporates his memory, reality and experiences in 16:9 format paintings.

The Soul of My Mother was made for his mother, who passed away this year. He painted the room when she was

dying because it made him consider the eternal question.

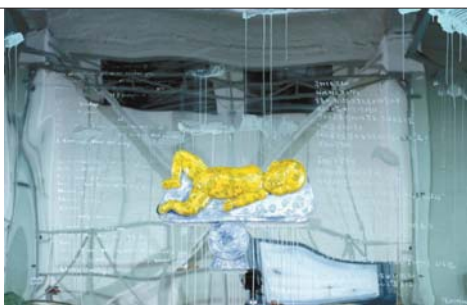
"I was curious about where my mother's soul would go. Did it end up attached to the cupboard?" he said.

Zhang's first teacher was his mother. She bought him pencils and paint to keep him occupied as a child, and he took an interest in art by age four. "She taught me how to draw simple things," he said.

Some critics and his friends say it is impossible to understand Zhang's art without knowing his tortured feelings about his mother and her schizophrenic condition.

When he was a teen, his mother was diagnosed as a schizophrenic. When he moved away from home, his mother wrote him letters frequently. "Some people would no doubt call them incoherent, but I thought they were full of poetry. I had the urge to find out who she really was.

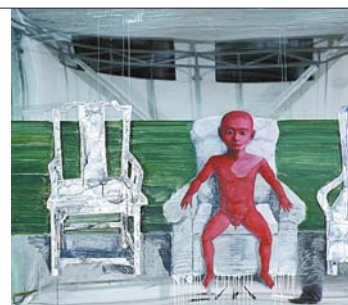
"Reality and history are being shaped quickly, and I'm confused about both. Digging into the past doesn't have to be about nostalgia. For me, looking back gives me a reference point to understand the now."



Unable to Measure



Heaven No.3



Three Chairs

Y Zhang Xiaogang's new works from the past



Train Window - School



Train Window - Blackout

I wanted to find out about my parents when they were young," he said.

When Zhang fell into desperation in 1992, he returned to his hometown to consider the changes he had made to his painting style. He found inspiration in the old photos of his mother and began to paint his Bloodline series.

"It is no exaggeration to say all of my works were created by the two of us," he said.

On the maternal side, Zhang likes music and movie.

He spent this year working on the new series Train Window, inspired by watching American director Jim Jarmusch's movies. "I was fascinated by a scene from Jarmusch's movie: the scenery outside of train windows looked still and impassive," he said.

The films reminded him of memories of the long trips by

rail that took him far away from home in his youth to study at the Sichuan Academy of Art in Chongqing in 1978.

"Those dull journeys back and forth between Kunming and Chongqing left a strong impression on me," he said.

Unlike what he sees in reality, his paintings reveal scenery outside the window that is still and clear while the inside of the train is a blur.

"When people look out through a window, what they see is sometimes what they carry around in their own heart," he said. "My art is always the window of my heart."

Like China's classical literati painters, who often inserted poems or prose to accompany their finished pieces as a way to record and express their mood during the time of creation, Zhang also writes some part of his diaries on

the canvas or steel.

Western rock 'n' roll has a special place in his memories of youth.

In one of the new paintings, he transcribed "Blue Sunday" by The Doors. "I hope by knowing the song, the viewer can better understand what I was thinking about when I painted this piece," he said.

Zhang's obsession with memory stems in part from his disillusionment with reality.

"We are experiencing unprecedented, rapid development in Chinese society. Reality and history are being shaped quickly, and I'm confused about both," he said. "Digging into the past doesn't have to be about nostalgia. For me, looking back gives me a reference point to understand the now."



The Soul of Mother



Train Window - Red Plum

16:9 - Zhang Xiaogang Solo Exhibition

Where: Today Art Museum, Building 4, Pingod Community, 32 Baiziwan Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until December 26, daily except Monday, 10 am - 5 pm

Admission: 20 yuan, 10 yuan for students

Tel: 5876 9804

Photos provided by Today Art Museum

Understanding a decade of Chinese subculture



Culturescapes China: China's Cultural Scene Since 2000

Edited by Katharina Schneider-Roos and Stefanie Thiedig, 240pp, Christoph Merian Verlag, 230 yuan

By He Jianwei

A new book about Chinese subculture during the last decade was published by Basel's publishing house Christoph Merian Verlag this September.

Culturescapes China: China's Cultural Scene Since 2000 collected the works of 30 authors writing a 10-year retrospective on fine arts, film, photography, literature, theater, music and architecture.

"We felt the art scene in China, and especially in Beijing, is on the verge of a change," said Stefanie Thiedig, co-editor of the book. "Our goal was to define the present scene by reviewing the past 10 years and venture a guess into future development."

Thiedig runs a culture agency, Kulturgut, in Beijing. She and freelance filmmaker Katharina Schneider-Roos started to edit the book in 2009.

"The main focus of this book lies in how artists deal with commemoration – because we see a change in reflection after the hype and boom of the years between 2000 and 2009, after the Olympic Games and espe-

cially after the financial crisis," Thiedig said.

Today artists are moving into a time of reflection.

In fine art, many top artists have been recognized by international collectors. High auction prices have transformed contemporary Chinese art into an industry. Artists once unknown to the public have become big names.

"798 Art District is a good example of the transition from underground culture to industrialized culture," she said.

The main chapters are fine arts, film and photography, literature and theater, music and architecture – each written by five authors who were actively involved in China since more or less 2000 visualizing their experience of the past 10 years.

In the book, readers can learn how the first Chinese electronic music festival ran without electricity and why a house in hutong, preserved in its original form, had to be restored for the Olympics.

"We searched for analysis in form and content, illustrating the publication with pictorial sections for an additional visual

understanding," she said.

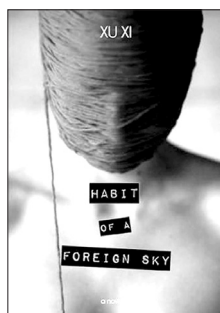
For the literature chapter, the editors invited Martin Winter, a well-known translator of Chinese contemporary literature into German. Among his most popular translations are Liu Zhenyun's *Cell Phone* and Hong Ying's *K: The Art of Love*. These novelists' books have been translated into many languages and are famous for their sharp observations of emotional problems in urban life.

Thiedig and Schneider-Roos also invited Chinese experts, such as theater director Cao Kefei. Cao has worked both in China and Germany, translating Austrian novelist and playwright Thomas Bernhard's play for its first performance in Beijing.

Each chapter includes a brief introduction with the background of a specific discipline in China.

"What we were looking for, on the one hand, was the development and reorganization of the art scene with the most significant happenings during this time," she said. "On the other hand, we were grasping for the active involvement of the authors and artists and their own point of view."

Bookworm book listing



Vivian Wang from the Bookworm recommends the following best-sellers to *Beijing Today* readers.

The Finkler Question

By Howard Jacobson, 320pp, Bloomsbury USA, \$15

Julian Treslove, former BBC radio producer, and Sam Finkler, popular Jewish philosopher, writer and TV personality, are old school friends. Despite a prickly relationship and very different lives, they have never lost touch with each other. Dining together one night at their former teacher Libor Sevcik's apartment, the men share a sweetly painful evening, reminiscing on a time before they had loved and lost, before they had prized anything greatly enough to fear its loss. As Treslove makes his way home, he is attacked and mugged outside a violin dealer's window.

The General: Charles De Gaulle and the France He Saved

By Jonathan Fenby, 720pp, Simon & Schuster, \$33.23

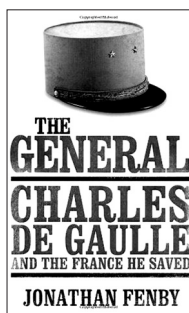
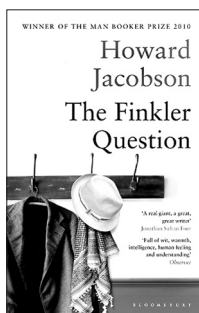
As founder and first President of the Fifth Republic, General Charles de Gaulle saw himself "carrying France on my shoulders." This is a biography of one of the great leaders of the 20th century and of the country with which he so identified himself.

Habit of a Foreign Sky

By Xu Xi, 288pp, Haven Books, \$15

Life takes an abrupt shift for Gail Szeto, when her mother, her last family member, is killed in an accident. For Szeto, a mixed-race, single mother who buried her young son less than two years prior, all she has left is a hard-won career at a global investment bank. Gail, once so sure of her future, watches as her life plunges into freefall.

(By He Jianwei)



The life of Beat legend Dylan

By Charles Zhu

Bob Dylan made his name with a catalog of outstanding American vernacular music. Today he's the elusive target of Sean Wilentz, an endowed Princeton professor of history who tries to unravel just what made the singer so interesting in his book *Bob Dylan in America*.

Wilentz grew up as a kid in Greenwich Village. The author's father and uncle ran a bookstore on Eighth Street in the Village that was a haunt of beat poets and bohemians. Wilentz was 13 when he first saw Dylan.

His book traces the ups and downs of Dylan's career – the confounding *Self-Portrait* album in 1970, his rebirth in the mid-1970s with *Blood on the Tracks*, the rebirth of his evangelical period and a third rebirth in the 1990s and 2000s. Dylans has for decades provided the backdrop of American music, literature, religion and politics.

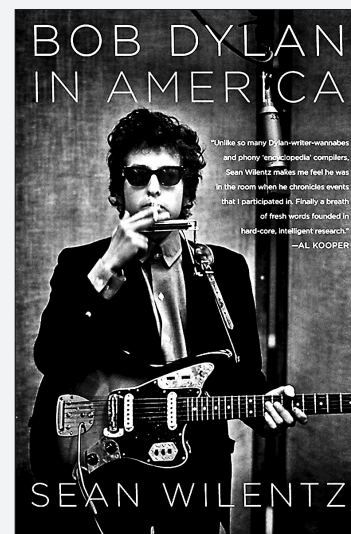
While Dylan "owns the 1960s," Wilentz writes, he is "largely a product of the 1940s and 1950s."

"Dylan has never limited himself to loving and stealing things from other Americans. But his historical as well as melodic themes have constantly recurred to the American past and the American present, and are built mainly out of American tropes and chords," he writes.

Wilentz, the historian-in-residence on Dylan's website, makes a penetrative exploration of Dylan's connection with Aaron Copland. Copland influenced the young Dylan in the way that his early "left-wing Popular Front politics" gave way to acceptance. Nor should people overlook the influence of Norman Raeben, who taught Dylan painting in 1974, and "some of the stanzas" on some of the songs are "painterly."

He also tells of a historic encounter between Dylan and Allen Ginsberg when Ginsberg was crashing at Wilentz's uncle Ted's apartment above Wilentz's dad's bookstore in December 1963. The two forged a lifelong friendship, even though it began with the horndog poet unsuccessfully hitting on Dylan.

Wilentz devotes one chapter to Atlanta



Bob Dylan in America
By Sean Wilentz, 400pp, Doubleday, \$28.95

guitarist Blind Willie McTell's influence in shaping Dylan as an artist. Dylan's 1983 song bearing his name is surely one of the greatest tunes in Dylan's catalog of lyrics. McTell served as a model for Dylan: he was not only talented in the blues, but a master of American idioms, skilled at reorienting and improving on his forebears' vernacular.

The book also explores the relationship between the folkies and the Beats – particularly Dylan's with Ginsberg.

Wilentz tries to present the socio-historical backdrop of Dylan's musical and verbal sources by dissecting Dylan's song lyrics. He studies Dylan's music and the language he used. He explores how Dylan requotes words from old songs "in a clever and amusing way... with his backbeats and his pauses, he is also having fun playing around with rhythm."

Wilentz writes for *The Daily Beast* and is a contributing editor at *The New Republic*.

Top gaming picks for the holidays

15

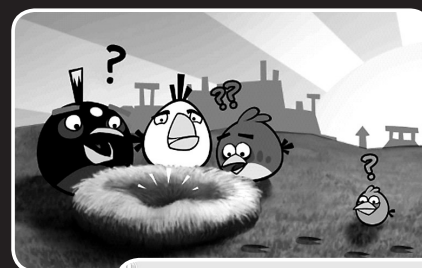
Trend

By Wang Yu

The end of the year is nigh and the holidays are approaching fast. For those who aren't into parties or tourism, stay-at-home gaming is a good alternative.

A good game – be it for cell phone or video game console – is a journey. Game geeks may say they experience life through these artificial worlds. However, for most players it's all about fun.

This week, *Beijing Today* introduces some of the top games worth looking into this winter.



Angry Birds

Vincent Wen, an IT engineer, carries his iPad everywhere. It may not be the 3G version, but Wen isn't carrying it to browse the Web – he's playing Angry Birds, a best-selling game from the App Store.

"The game is simple to play, but it's hard to get a top score. You have to keep trying to break your record," Wen says.

The cute character designs help keep his attention for hours.

Designed by Finland-based studio Rovio, the game was released on iPhone and ported to other mobile operating systems such as Android, Symbian and Windows 7 mobile. More than 12 million copies have sold through the App Store alone.

The story is simple: pigs stole eggs from the birds, and now the birds want revenge. There are a variety of birds with different functions that the player can launch from a slingshot. The pigs are stationed on or within various structures and require the player to find the best angle to slay the most pigs.

In October, Rovio released a Halloween edition with new levels and holiday music. The latest update was the Christmas edition with 25 Christmas levels for

each day in December.

Rovio used to be a small company, but its games have won worldwide fame. Its players around the world spend a collective 200 million minutes playing Rovio games each day.

In the US, a homemade Angry Birds costume was a big hit during Halloween. Last Saturday, fans met in New York and other big cities in the US to celebrate the first anniversary of the game. In China, stuffed dolls of the characters sold well on Taobao. For players who do not have an Xbox 360 or a PlayStation 3, the cell phone edition is the best option.

Rovio is working on new versions of the game for other game consoles, a movie and a TV series.

Console: iPhone, iPad or any

Android phone.

Price: 37.5 yuan

Gran Turismo 5

Dennis Zhang works for a video sharing website. The 29-year-old editor's wedding is scheduled for next January. He recently purchased a PlayStation 3 to play the latest installment in the Gran Turismo series of racing games.

"I bought the special edition of GT5 – the blue one with the game disc. The game made me decide to buy the PlayStation. Now I spend hours at night practicing driving. The vehicles in GT5 drive more like a real car than what you find in other games, and that makes it much more difficult to control," Zhang says.

First released on PlayStation, the GT series was designed as a driving simulator. The game allows players to drive many simulations of real world cars. Tracks feature many real world driving conditions to allow players to challenge themselves.

It's been five years since GT4 took players by storm on PlayStation 2. This time, Sony Computer Entertainment co-operated with Red Bull of Formula 1 to create X1, an original racing car in the game for the players to win in GT5.

Zhang preordered his on Taobao. The debut version of the game contains a car guide book,



a download card for PlayStation Network and the game disc. The luxury version comes with a wallet and a model car.

Preview videos recorded by early buyers can be found on Youku and Tudou, along with some guides for each track. Players looking for a more authentic driving experience can plug a Racing Wheel controller into their game console.

"I drive a Ford Focus, and I drive the same car in the game. I have to say it is almost the same experience using the digital car. But it's really cool to be able to win a Ferrari in the GT world," Zhang says.

The PlayStation 3 has not been released on the Chinese mainland, so most fans purchase the game through Hong Kong outlets.

Console: PlayStation 3

Price: 400 yuan



Call of Duty: Black Ops

Released in November, Black Ops, the latest version of the Call of Duty series, sold more than 7 million copies in the US and the UK within 24 hours. It has become impossible to find in China.

Black Ops is a first-person shooter (FPS) similar to Half Life on PC. The player takes the role of a special force operative to conduct black operations behind enemy lines in the game's Cold War campaign mode.

Though the plot is nothing new, great visual effects and the original music make the game worth buying.

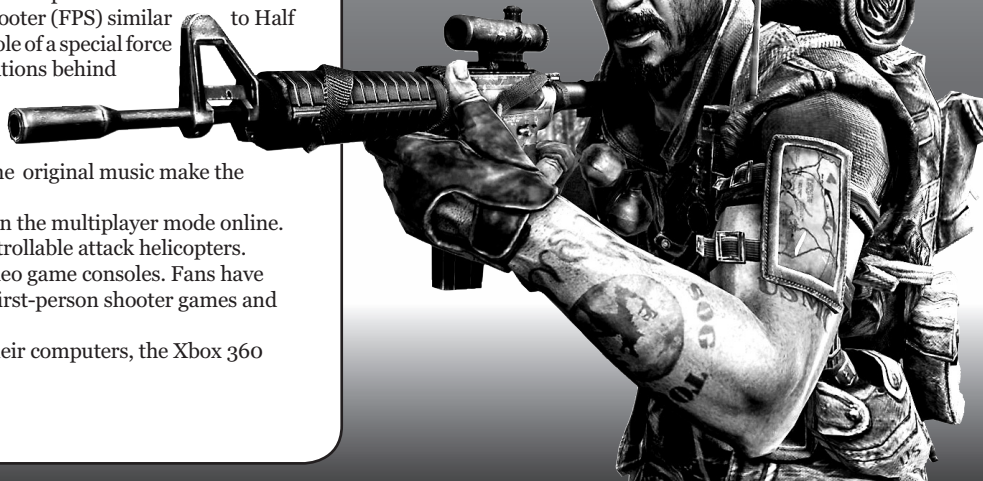
Players can unlock awards and new weapons, which can be used in the multiplayer mode online. New custom rewards include explosive cars, guided missiles and controllable attack helicopters.

The series was first released on the PC and was soon ported to video game consoles. Fans have long complained that the PlayStation controller is not well suited to first-person shooter games and can quickly cause strains and pains.

For players eager to try out Black Ops but unwilling to upgrade their computers, the Xbox 360 version is a better choice.

Console: PC, Xbox 360, PlayStation 3

Price: 320 yuan



Editor: Wang Yu Designer: Zhao Yan

BEIJING TODAY

Staying warm in a low-carbon way

By Annie Wei

Anyone who's read the novel *Moment in Peking*, written by Lin Yutang in 1939, has a distinct impression about Beijing's winters: a blue, still sky and dry, cold air. It's not too different from today.

But back then, people had ingenious ways of keeping warm: using heavy cotton curtains, paper glued to the windows' seams, thick rugs and hand warmers.

In other words, they were carbon-conscious before they knew the concept existed. *Beijing Today* thinks they had the right spirit, so we've scouted items that will keep you warm without running up your energy bill.



Cashmere pillow case and scarf from Non.Sense

Light but warm outfit

Warmth has little to do with thickness. The key is the insulation.

Quality goose or duck down is light and does well at insulating the body. Cashmere scarves are perfect because they're comfortable and great at blocking the wind.

If you are out on a rainy day, we recommend waterproof boots and two pairs of socks: a pair of light nylon outside a pair of wool. For the upper body, wear a long-sleeve T-shirt made of microfiber, a cashmere sweater and a quality down winter jacket.

Do the above and you'll be warm even when it's -10 C outside.

We recommend cashmere products from Non.Season, a brand established by local designer Zhang Di. The name refers to all-season wear that fits all body sizes, ages and trends. Non.Season products, starting from a few hundred yuan, use quality long-fiber cashmere from Mongolia and Nepal. The material is soft, warm and can be machine-washed. Most styles are simple and practical for mixing and matching on different occasions.

We also found designer Wang Zhi's collection Uma Wang (starting from 2,000 yuan) at Brand New China store. Its winter collection is fashionable and cozy.

Non.Season & Uma Wang

Where: B.N.C., NLG9, The Village North, 19 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 12:30-8:30 pm

Tel: 6416 9045



Cashmere pajama from Non.Sense



Uma Wang's winter collection



Photos provided by B.N.C.



Fragrance

People who exercise regularly or are blessed with high metabolisms are less afraid of the cold. Fragrance can increase one's metabolism as well. After showering, mix three to four drops of essential oil into your lotion or virgin olive oil and massage your body, which will heat it up. It can also help your mood and take care of your skin. The right essential oils includes black pepper, lemon and rosemary.

A new scent product, Six Scents perfume, just launched in Sanlitun. The brand only selects six artists every year to design a series of six fragrances (1,300 yuan each).

Six Scents

Where: NLG-24, North Village, 19 Sanlitun, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am - 8 pm

Tel: 5935 9218

Photo provided by Six Scents



Photo provided by Taobao

Tangpozi

Made of bronze, such a hot water container is necessary to keep your bed warm. Available at Taobao, starting from 100 yuan for a quality one.



Felt handbag, 210 yuan; gloves, 159 yuan; slippers, 98 yuan Photos provided by Yue Kun

Unique felt design

Yue Kun, a woman in her 20s, likes felt so much that she opened a Taobao store two years ago to sell her specially-designed felt products. Yue said felt is a special material that can be formed into different shapes and is environmentally friendly.

Yue's products are all handmade.

They come in warm and lovely colors like orange, sky blue and pink. The prices are reasonable. A sunflower clutch costs 210 yuan, a pair of slippers is only 80 to 98 yuan and a pair of dandelion gloves is 159 yuan.

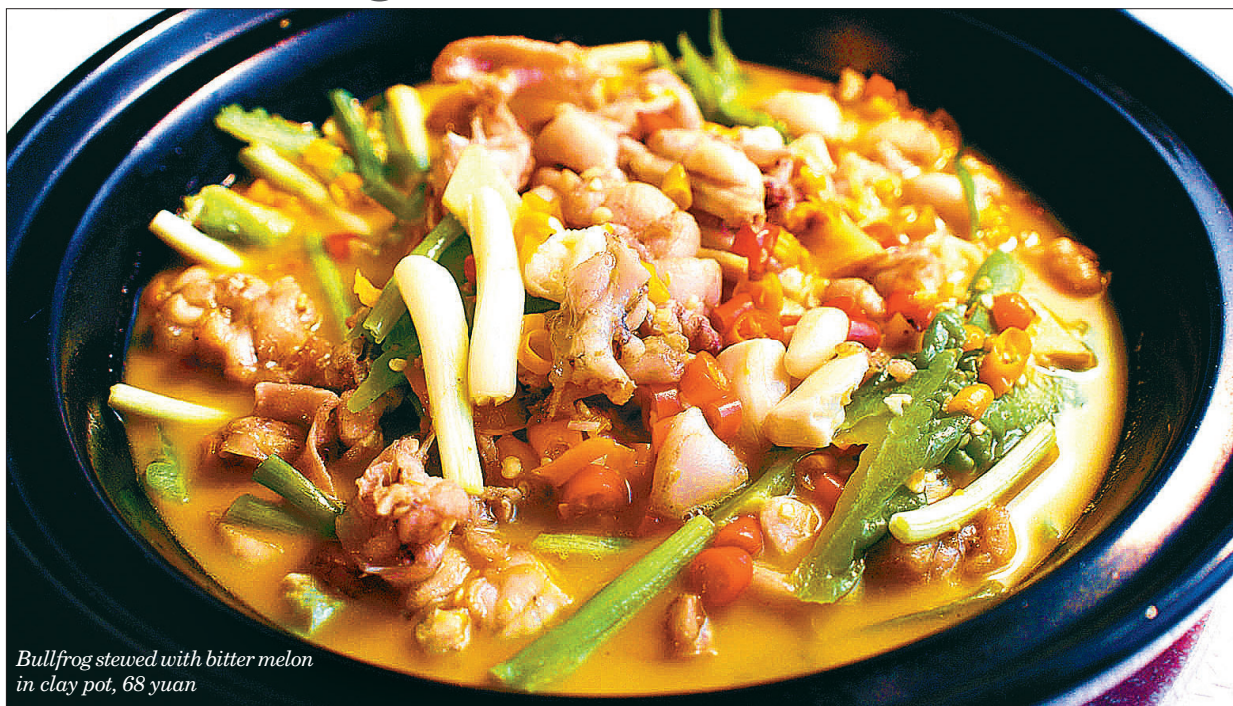
Customers can place orders for felt

iPod and iPad covers. All covers are custom made within three days. She has iPod Nano covers for sale for 70 yuan.

"My production is very small," Yue said. "If I cannot complete a customer's order, I just do not take it."

Website: shop33396290.taobao.com

Real Hunan flavor hidden in hutong community



Bullfrog stewed with bitter melon in clay pot, 68 yuan



Steamed fish head with chili pepper, 68 yuan

By Wang Yu

Like Sichuan cuisine, Hunanese food, also called *xiangcai*, is known for its spices, though the people from Hunan use more types of peppers. It's less spicy than its Sichuan cousin, but just as flavorful.

Experienced diners say the best xiangcai restaurants are always small and tucked within communities. The locations may keep some people away, but they help preserve the restaurants' quality and authenticity.

Nice Rice is one of these restaurants. Located at Jiadaokou South Avenue near the Central Academy of Drama, it has become like a backyard dining hall for students.

Fu Rong, the owner, worked in the movie industry before opening Nice Rice a few months ago. She works alongside her mother and sister, and all the cooks were invited from her hometown in Hunan Province.

Unlike many Hunan restaurants that rework their dishes to fit the taste buds of Beijingers, Nice Rice maintains an authentic Hunan style. Fu makes sure its dishes are the same as the ones back home.

There are some ordinary dishes such as bullfrog stewed with balsam pear (bitter melon) in clay pot (68 yuan) that can be used to test a xiangcai restaurant's quality; Nice Rice passes with flying colors. The clay pot keeps the food warm, while the sauce is mixed with a variety of chili flavors that make every bite exciting.

Steamed fish head with chili pepper (68 yuan) is another must-have dish. To keep the fish fresh and to avoid waste, the restaurant only cooks a certain number per day. Cut into two pieces, the fish head is cooked with two kinds of chili. Diners can experience two flavors in one dish. The taste is soft and smooth, and the sauce isn't too spicy.

As for vegetables, cauliflower stir-fried in clay pot (26 yuan) is good to try. The flavor may be a little strong, but it goes well with rice.

The restaurant is decorated in a cozy style. The counter contains a variety of wines and liquors, from local Erguotou to imported red wine. The biggest surprise is the tree growing from the inner room.

The restaurant has a second floor with a balcony that is used for dinner parties.

Nice Rice

Where: 79, Jiadaokou Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District
Open: 10:30 am - 10:30 pm
Tel: 6407 9619



Fried bamboo shoots and ham, 36 yuan
Photos provided by Nice Rice

Serving up a traditional, warm Christmas meal at Village Cafe

By Annie Wei

With expats leaving town for the holidays, many small but quality restaurants are also letting their chefs take a couple weeks off.

Those who are in town though can find a nice and affordable three-course Christmas set dinner (128 yuan) at The Village Cafe.

A great Christmas pairing is stewed venison for the main course with a dessert of warm toffee and ginger pudding with vanilla-milk ice cream.

Venison is only served during the winter. Chef Lee Keonggan shared his recipe: preserve the meat for 24 hours with ingredients like red wine, onions, carrots, celery, two herbs cloves and juniper berry. Take the meat out and filter the wine. Stew the preserved venison with minced onions and tomato sauce and pour in the filtered wine for 30 minutes. Serve with baby carrots



Ginger pudding and vanilla ice cream
Photo by Ding Chunhan

and crispy bread.

The restaurant uses venison from northeast China. People interested in making the dish at home can buy meat from supermarkets like Carrefour and Wal-Mart. Baby carrots are more nutritious than carrots, and can be found at Sanyuanli vegetable market.

Toffee and ginger pudding comes topped with extras like ground ginger,

zested lemon and diced stem ginger in syrup. The strong ginger scents give it a very Christmas feel. The pudding is very sweet and the vanilla-milk ice cream is fresh.

The set menu includes a glass of wine or beer, as well as coffee or tea, with starters like cream of butternut squash soup and warm mushroom salad with olives, rocket and oregano dressing. Main course choices include grilled tenderloin on kumara mash, glazed shallot, sauteed spinach and red wine; and pan-fried sea bream fillet with herb and chestnut bread crumb, honey baked baby carrot and balsamic dressing.

The Village Cafe

Where: 1/F, The Opposite House, Building 1, Sanlitun Village, 11 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District
Open: 24 hours
Tel: 6410 5210

Spend Christmas Eve on a French carousel

By Chu Meng

Le Manege, located at the heart of the central business district (CBD), is a replica of a French village. Tan Zhiyuan, a Hong Kong man in his 40s, is a global traveler and gourmet who opened this restaurant with the intention of bringing what he saw and tasted in the lovely French countryside to urban inhabitants.

The whole restaurant has a fairytale atmosphere. In the center there is a real carousel, with tables replacing the hobbyhorses, and Easter masks decorating the golden canopy.

Wooden country horses stand around, each painted a different color. There are separate rooms for parties of 10 to 30 people, with luxury interior decorations, wine cabinets and Karaoke sets. Flagstone paths zigzagging through are replicas from the French village.

The average cost per person comes to around 250 yuan, placing the restaurant in the mid-range locally. However, the dishes vary widely in price: the grilled Australian rib eye with veg-



Inside Le Manege
Photo provided by Le Manege

etables is 188 yuan, while French baked snails are 32 yuan.

The best-selling dish is the grilled lamb chop served with roasted garlic, sundried tomato, asparagus and rosemary sauce (138 yuan). Diners will have a pleasant experience but not a top-end one, as servers are still on their learning curve.

The restaurant offers wedding feasts for up to 150 people. The meal can be either a French buffet or in a traditional Chinese style, ranging from 288 yuan to 588 yuan per person.

Le Manege is currently accepting reservations for its Christmas Eve seafood feast. For 328 yuan, one can enjoy a chef's special six-course dinner, free French wine and admission to a Christmas party with live music until late at night.

Le Manege

Where: 2nd floor, Beijing Fortune Mall, No. 7, Dong Sanhuan Lu, Chaoyang District (Subway Line 10, Jintaixi-zhao station, Exit A)

Open: 10 am - 9:30 pm
Tel: 13520613273 for English

The art of water

By Zhang Dongya

"The highest kindness is like water," Laozi, a philosopher in ancient China, said in Daodejing. And so it is that contemporary artist Li Xin, who is fond of water, tries to portray this virtue in his works.

More than 20 of his works featuring water, including oil on canvas and ink on Xuan paper, are currently on display at Yishu 8 Gallery. Li named the exhibition using five Chinese characters that each has a connection to water: soak, moisten, permeate, immerse and sink.

The artist said he loves all things that travel downward, including rain, teardrops and tree roots.

"I love water, which can find its balance and level even in the lowest place. As Laozi said, water even flows to places despised by man," Li said.

Water can also soothe, which is something Li knows all about.

"Every time before I enter my studio, I will sleep for a while, letting my heartbeat and pulse calm down and find a balance – an ideal state to work," he said.

To help people better understand and enjoy Li's paintings, the gallery, for the first time, made an accompanying 13-minute film to show how the artist lives and creates his art.

"All the paintings look abstract, but in fact they are not – they are very deeply linked with Song Dynasty landscape paintings," said



Christine Cayol, curator of Yishu 8 Gallery.

"And they all come with very deep feelings from Li Xin's life when he was a kid."

In the film, Li walks across a field of wheat in his hometown in Shaanxi Province

and ladles a cup of water from the bank of the Yellow River. With the water, he creates works in his studio with different kinds of brushes, including a typical wall brush in northern China. He also paints on uneven rocks and walls of cave dwellings in northwest China.

"Li's works have two ultimate aspects," Cayol said. "When you look at his painting, you have two feelings. One is immobile and so quiet, which is like the turtle that doesn't move. But you will also have a sort of motion in the edges because you see some mark of water which gives feelings of movement, like a bird spreading its wings."

For Li, all his paintings are the result of going with the flow. One of his previous works, which people took to calling "Red Sun," attracted lots of attention, but when he set out to do a series of those paintings, he failed.

"You can do little to water, because you cannot control its flow too much. Just let it go and never impose too much of your thought," he said.

Scripture of Water

Where: Yishu 8 Gallery, Cable 8 Factory, 8 Langjiayuan, Jianguo Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until February 9, 2011, daily except Sunday, 10 am – 6:30 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6581 9058

Upcoming

Nightlife

Erez Eisenman

Singer-songwriter Eisenman performs folk-rock songs with a touch of blues with bassist Wang Yuhong and drummer Charles Bronson.

Where: Yugongyishan, 3-2 Zhangzizhong Lu, Dongcheng District

When: December 22, 9 pm

Admission: 30 yuan

Tel: 6404 2711

Stage in January

Concert

Pinchas Zukerman and Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: January 2, 7:30 pm

Admission: 280-1,280 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000

Bamberg Symphony Orchestra

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: January 3, 7:30 pm

Admission: 200-880 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000

American Symphony Orchestra

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: January 4, 7:30 pm

Admission: 80-880 yuan

Tel: 6551 8058

Dance

Nacho Duato's Choreography

Where: Theater Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: January 13-15, 7:30 pm

Admission: 160-500 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000

Madame Butterfly

Where: Opera House of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: January 13-16, 7:30 pm

Admission: 100-580 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000

Fuego! – Carmen Mota's First China Tour

Where: Beijing Exhibition Center Theater, 135 Xizhimen Wai Dajie, Xicheng District

When: January 18-23, 7:30 pm

Admission: 180-1,200 yuan

Tel: 5129 7260

Drama

Lao She's Short Stories: Five Acts of Life

Where: Theater Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: January 1-9, 7:30 pm

Admission: 180-680 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000

Opera

Red Cliff

Where: Opera House of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: January 13-16, 7:30 pm

Admission: 100-580 yuan

Tel: 6655 0000

(By He Jianwei)

5 Friday, December 17

Movie

The Solitude of Prime Numbers (2010)

This film is an adaptation of the bestseller of the same name by Italian writer Paolo Giordano, tracing 24 hours in the lives of a pair of upper middle-class Italian schoolmates who experience similar troubled childhoods.

Where: Italian Cultural Institute, 2 Dong Er Jie, Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 7:30 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6532 2187

Exhibition



Take Portraits of Them – The Photography of Li Donghan

The photographer takes pictures of plants in an effort to communicate with nature.

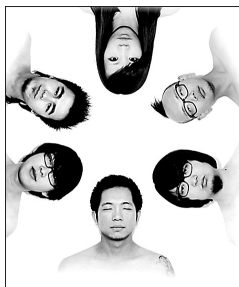
Where: 798 Photo Gallery, 798 Art District, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until January 7, 2011, daily except Monday, 11 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6438 1784

Nightlife



Namo

Inspired by Buddhism, this rock and reggae band recently released its first album.

Where: Mao Livehouse, 111 Gulou Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 8:30 pm

Admission: 49 yuan

advance purchase, 59 yuan at the door

Tel: 6402 5080

6 Saturday, December 18

Exhibition

Film: One Monk Temple

This exhibition presents one film and two

installations by Shen Shaoming that have nothing to do with Buddhism and spirituality. Shen believes Buddhism has evolved into an industrialization phenomenon.

Where: Art Channel, 249 Caochangdi Village, Chaoyang District

When: Until January 16, 2011, daily except Monday, 11 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6433 5080

Nightlife



Farewell Floral Times

The folk musician Kulu Leong, based in Beijing, makes music that is quiet

and unadorned; he released his first album in September.

Where: Mako Livehouse, 36 Guangqu Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 8 pm

Admission: 40 yuan advance purchase, 60 yuan at the door

Tel: 5205 1112

Movie

Cinderella Man (2005)



This movie was inspired by the true story of James J. Braddock, an Irish American boxer who held the World Heavyweight Championship from 1935 to 1937.

Where: Lady Book Saloon, 69 Chengfu Lu, Haidian District

When: 7:30 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6270 1928

Sunday, December 19

Exhibition

Twittering – Guangci's Art

This exhibition shows Qu Guangci's new sculptures made in the two years since coming to Beijing in 2009. Inspired by ancient Chinese paintings, he wants viewers to think about the relationship between the artist and reality.

Where: PIFO New Art Gallery, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxian-

qiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until January 17, 2011, daily except Monday, 11 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 5978 9562

Nightlife

Wang Fanrui

This folk musician, named Best New Artist of 2006 at the Beijing Pop Music Awards, examines modern life in his melancholy melodies.

Where: Jianghu Bar, 7 Dongmianhua Hutong, Jiadaokou

Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: November 11, 9 pm

Admission: 30 yuan

Tel: 6401 4611

Movie

Esther (1986)

This film retells the familiar biblical story of Esther, who does not know she is Jewish when she is chosen by King Ashasuerus as his wife. Discovering a plot against her people, she manages to save them.

Where: French Cultural Center, 1/F, Guangcai Interna-

tional Mansion, 18 Gongti Xi Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 7:30 pm

Admission: 20 yuan, 10 yuan for students

Tel: 6553 2627



By Chu Meng

More than 1 billion people start their day with a cup of java, making coffee the most popular drink around the world after water. Economically speaking, the industry is second only to oil.

However, many coffee lovers feel it is a guilty pleasure because of health concerns. Coffee has been blamed for causing anxiety, insomnia, increased blood pressure and calcium deficiency.

"Coffee is not only caffeine and is good for the health because of other bioactive compounds," said Dr. Darcy Lima, author of *An Unashamed Defense of Coffee*. The book's Chinese version, translated by Hu Dayi, an educator from the Chinese Ministry of Health, was published in Beijing last week.

Lima has researched coffee and its effects on the body and mind since the 1980s. He also started the project Coffee at School Breakfast in the US in 2000.

The book presents 101 potential health benefits of coffee, proving that coffee in moderation can actually prevent many diseases.

"Non-coffee drinkers are strongly recommended to start drinking coffee, but correctly after reading this book," he wrote in the preface.

Beijing Today is highlighting several of the book's more important lessons.

Coffee undeserving of bad rap



CFP Photo

1 Not just caffeine

Caffeine bears the brunt of blames, but coffee is not the only food that contains caffeine. The Chinese national drink, tea, especially black tea, contains the same amount of caffeine as coffee. Carbonated drinks and chocolates are also high in caffeine.

"There is certainly more good news than bad news, in terms of coffee and health," said Hu Dayi. People neglect the other bioactive compounds found in coffee such as the chlorogenic acids, niacin acids and minerals that have positive effects on health.

Research has shown that coffee drinkers, compared with non-drinkers, are less likely to have type 2 diabetes, Parkinson's disease, dementia, certain cancers and heart rhythm problems.

2 Good for pregnancy

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists stated in August that daily moderate caffeine intake can clearly help reduce depression during pregnancy.

Moderate means an intake of less than 200 milligrams of caffeine per day, or about the amount in three regular cups of moderately brewed coffee. It does not appear to have any effect on miscarriage, premature delivery or fetal growth. Instead, it improves mood and pleasure by stimulating the release of endorphins.

3 Good for teens

Drinking three to four regular cups of coffee can improve students' attention and concentration and enhance memory in class.

"More and more teen nutrition experts in the US, Italy and France are recommending coffee as part of a student's daily diet after age 10. Students are recommended to drink coffee at 7 am after breakfast, at 1 pm after lunch and at 3 pm after school," Hu said.

Moderate caffeine intake can reduce fatigue and tension over exams. Chocolates can be equally helpful, he said.

4 Good for type 2 diabetes

The book calls the data on coffee and type 2 diabetes "very solid" based on more than 15 published studies. The vast majority of those studies have shown coffee aids in preventing diabetes. It can help reduce blood sugar content after each meal and regulate the digestive system.

Since 2005, Lima's team has conducted nine studies on the relationship between coffee and type 2 diabetes. Of more than 193,000 people, those who said they drank more than six or seven cups daily were 35 percent less likely to have type 2 diabetes than people who drank fewer than two cups daily.

Coffee contains minerals such as

magnesium and chromium, which help the body use insulin, which controls blood sugar contents. In type 2 diabetes, the body loses its ability to use insulin and regulate blood sugar effectively.

"There were similar effects observed in decaf coffee drinkers and tea drinkers. Heavy coffee drinking has not been shown to completely prevent diabetes," Hu said.

5 Prevents depression

Coffee drinks, especially with sugar, caramel syrup, hot chocolate or milk, can prevent depression.

Caffeine can stimulate the nervous system to produce more endorphins, which control the ability to feel pleasure. The thick aroma of just baked coffee beans, hot espresso or caramel macchiato alone can trigger endorphin production.

6 Good for the skin

Coffee drinkers may spend more time on the toilet because of caffeine's diuretic properties. Decaffeinated coffee has about the same effect on urine production as water.

A coffee facial pack early in the morning can help wipe out still-forming edemas. Soak the pack in black coffee and apply it to the face for no more than 15 minutes. It can also aid in reducing edema around

the eyes.

"Moderate application of a coffee face mask will not stain your skin," Hu said.

Drinking a cup of black coffee before going to the gym can improve exercise efficiency without damaging your daily calorie budget. Black coffee contains nearly zero calories and is much healthier than alternatives such as Coke Zero, Red Bull and Pocari Sweat.

7 Stop Parkinson's and Alzheimer's

Higher coffee consumption has long been associated with a decreased risk of Parkinson's disease.

Coffee has also been found to lower the risk of dementia, including Alzheimer's disease. A study conducted in Finland and Sweden followed 1,400 people during 20 years. Those who reported drinking three to five cups of coffee daily were 65 percent less likely to develop dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

8 Good for drivers

A cup of thick coffee is known to help people sober up. It can also fight hangovers the next morning. For the already sober, coffee can improve a driver's concentration and fight off sleepiness and fatigue.

Historical remains hidden in mountains

By Zhang Dongya

The mountains of suburban Beijing contain many historical sites that tell the story of an ancient time. Many of the buildings are in ruins after centuries of erosion. Some are in such bad conditions that they change noticeably every two or three years. But in Fangshan District, southwestern Beijing, a trek from Guji Mountain to Lingjiu Temple offers many clues to the past.

Most prefer touring during the winter because one gets the sense of the "historic bitterness" of the season, said Guo Hongyan, a guide in charge of the itinerary in Erdan Commune, a Beijing-based outdoor community.

Ming temples around Gaoqiao Bridge

Travelers gather in Lujiatan Village in Mentougou District in the early morning to hike for an hour and a half to the first historical site, the former foundation of Gaoqiao Temple in Fangshan.

Lujiatan Village is a large quarry, with all roads made of gravel. On the way to Gaoqiao Temple, one passes an aloof red building that is Guangzhi Temple. Facing east, it has only one windowless arch. A stone tablet reads Guan Yin Hall. Behind the hall is a stone pagoda.

The contents inside and a Buddha statue at the top have all been stolen.

A 10-minute walk east from here is a building that faces north. It is the last remaining hall of Huanxiu Temple, which was built in 1464 during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Visitors can still

see refined stone carvings on the mottled walls.

One will arrive at Gaoqiao, or Tall Bridge, by returning to the main road and walking west. The stone arch bridge is more than 20 meters long, with white stone guardrails on both sides.

Gaoqiao Temple was named after this bridge. The temple no longer exists, but remnants of a pagoda stands on its former site. The stone pagoda, built during Yuan Dynasty (1206-1368), was also called "overpass pagoda," for it was built with a door in its base for people to pass through. It is the only "overpass pagoda" in Beijing.

Unfortunately, the pagoda was overlooked in surveys on cultural relics during past decades, so few people know about it. It was well preserved until 1994, when it was destroyed by people who expected

to find valuables inside. Only its foundation remains.

Three pagodas in Guji Mountain

Not far from Gaoqiao Temple are three pagodas standing on three separate hills in Guji Mountain. Guji Mountain, or Cereal Heap Mountain, features three low peaks that resemble piles of cereal.

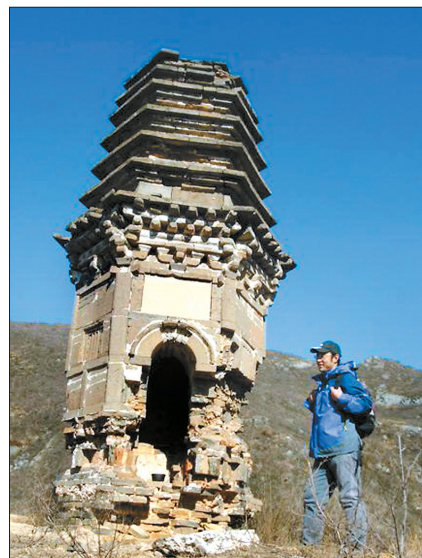
Dongta, or East Pagoda, is a stone pagoda built during Ming. At 6 meters high, it is well preserved with a stone-carved calabash at the top.

Bianta, or Bian (a kind of weapon in ancient China) Pagoda, was built during Liao Dynasty (907-1125). Built with bricks, it is a hexagon with seven stories. Its base is badly ruined on one side, making it look like a leaning tower.

Continued on page 21...



Only an aloof red building remains of old Guangzhi Temple.



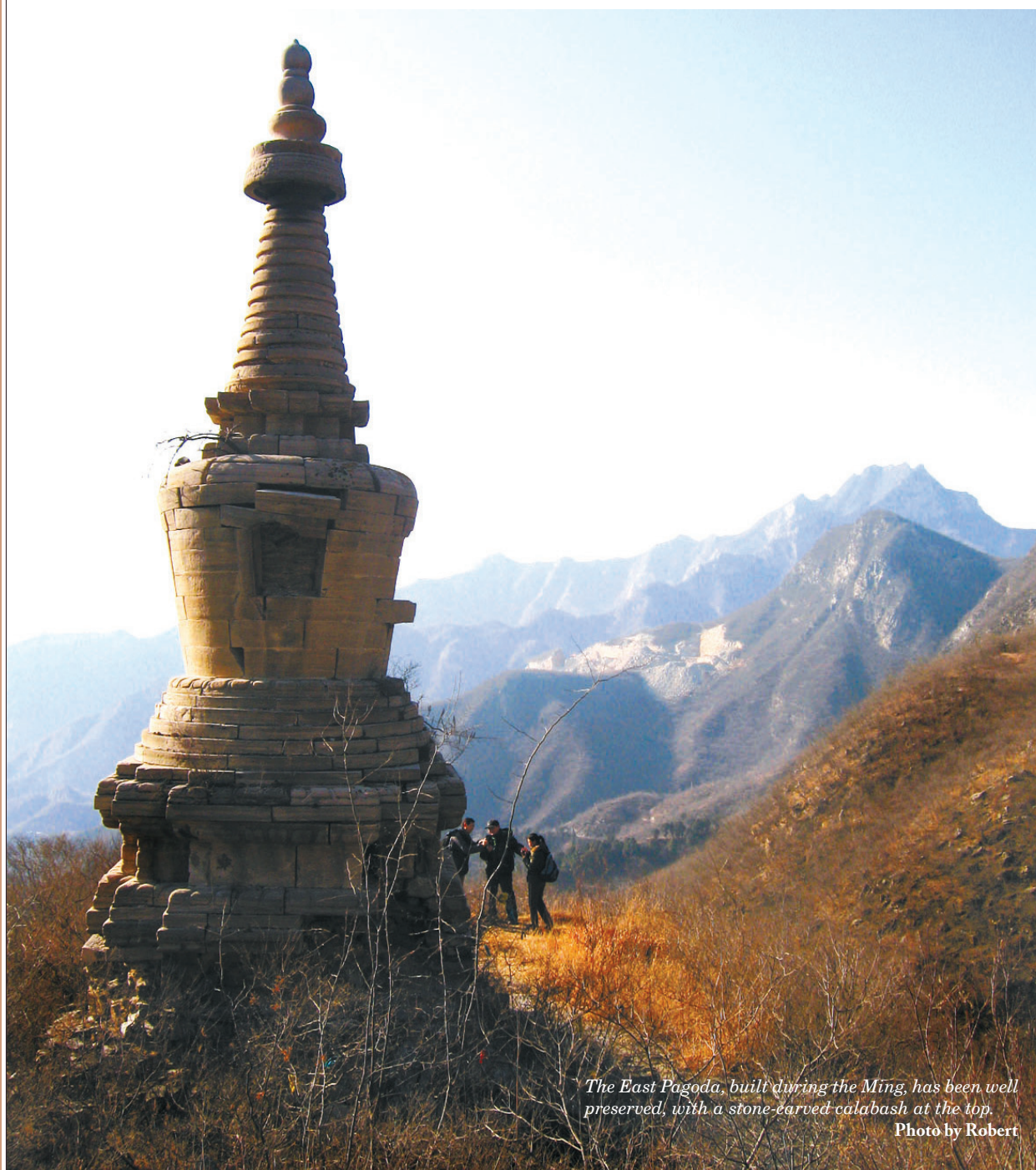
Bian Pagoda looks like a leaning tower, with its base badly ruined on one side.



Gaoqiao Bridge is an ancient stone arch bridge, with white stone guardrails on both sides.



The Bell Pagoda now has only two stories left. Photos by Xiaoxi



The East Pagoda, built during the Ming, has been well preserved, with a stone-carved calabash at the top. Photo by Robert



Restored Lingjiu Temple lost its original "historical bitterness."



In front of Yuantong Hall are well-preserved Ming stone steles.



There are large areas of persimmon trees around Gaoqiao, which interested visitors can pick.



Stone pagoda behind Guangzhi Temple
Photo by Xiaoxi

...continued from page 20

The third is called Lingdangta, or Bell Pagoda, which has only two stories left. It was also called Banruosi Pagoda, for there was once a temple called Banruo at the place.

During Ming Dynasty, eunuchs with courtly power built lots of temples. Wang Tingxiang, a Ming literati and philosopher, said there were 370 temples in the West Mountains, all built by eunuchs during the Zhengde Emperor's reign (1506-1521).

Near Bian Pagoda is the former site of Ming eunuchs' tombs, which have been wholly looted. Only some tombstones remain – they were built like the doors of Chinese traditional homes, with delicate stone carvings and ornaments.

Guo Hongyan, the guide who has walked this path dozens of times, said the pagodas have obviously changed in the last two years. "Tomb robbers destroyed a lot on the ancient buildings, weathering is another factor," he said. "The buildings lack protection due to the shortage of manpower and money, but they are certainly worthy of preservation."

Restored Yuantong and Lingjiu temples

The last stop on the route is a half-hour walk away: Yuantong Hall and Lingjiu Temple.

Built during Ming, Yuantong Temple used to have sev-



All that's left of the former site of Ming eunuchs' tombs are some tombstones.

eral halls, but only Yuantong Hall has survived. The hall is a hexagonal building facing south. Locals say there was a dragon carved in the ceiling of the hall, looking down, but it has been destroyed.

The old hall was outfitted with a new roof this year. The badly damaged parts were also rebuilt with new materials and the arch was painted a bright cinnabar. But to most visitors, the restoration has only made the newer parts stand out awkwardly.

In front of the hall are two well-preserved stone steles built during Ming.

Five minutes from this hall is Lingjiu Temple. It was first built during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), renamed Gujishan Temple in Liao (907-1125), then rebuilt in its present

name in Ming. The ancient complex was built on a north-south axis with a south-facing gate. It consists of a temple gate, main hall, east hall and two steles from Liao and Yuan.

The Eighteen Arhats used to be embedded in the middle wall in the main hall, with the Five Hundred Arhats in the side walls. The inscriptions were the work of fine ancient craftsmen and probably represented the highest achievements of Buddhist art, but today only ruins remain.

People can bring incense to pray in the main hall.

The temple has been restored with a new appearance, and now houses several monks.

Travel information

Basic itinerary:

1. Meet at 7:30 am at Pingguoyuan Station in Subway Line 1
2. Take Bus 931 to Lujiatan Stop
3. With a guide, walk to Gaoqiao Temple ruins at 10:50
4. Visit three pagodas in Guji Mountain at 11:30
5. Visit Yuantong Hall and Lingjiu Temple at 12:30
6. Have lunch and leave at 1:30 pm
7. Take Xiao 36 at Beichaying Village at 2:30 pm to head home

Notes:

1. Bring 2 liters of water and lunch for yourself.
2. A walking cane will be helpful.
3. Take a flashlight or headlamp to visit the caves.
4. There are large areas of persimmon trees around Gaoqiao, which interested visitors can pick – just do it moderately and don't ruin the trees.

For more information, check out Erdan Commune at lvy.info.



Yuantong Hall was outfitted with a new roof this year.
Photos by Robert

Dining

Christmas with a sophisticated edge

Aria's chef de cuisine Matthew McCool is teaming up with celebrated sommelier Jason Shi to present an exquisite four-course wine-paired Christmas set dinner menu. Each ticket includes a post-dinner flute of Moët et Chandon at Aria Bar. Cost is 1,188 yuan per person.

Allie Webb and her trio of jazz musicians at Aria Bar provide an air of Christmas spirit to accompany festive canapes, cocktails, wines, Champagnes and spirits.

Where: Aria Restaurant and Aria Bar, China World Hotel, 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District

When: December 24-31, Aria Restaurant, 6 pm – 10 pm, Aria Bar 9 pm – 2 am

Tel: 6505 2266 ext. 36

Dim Sum all you can eat!

The award-winning Crowne Plaza Beijing Zhongguancun extends its warmest season's greetings and invites you to join in its Dim Sum Festival in 2011.

Authentic Cantonese dim sum is served at Rouge Chinese Restaurant. Enjoy an unlimited selection during lunch. Recommended are the steamed prawn dumplings, steamed minced cuttlefish and prawns, baked Cappuccino tarts and more.

Where: Crowne Plaza Beijing Zhongguancun, 106 Zhichun Lu, Haidian District

Cost: 98 yuan (15 percent gratuity)

Tel: 5993 8888

Chinese New Year treats

Guests can usher in the Year of Rabbit with a line-up of festive goodies prepared by Shangri-La's Kerry Centre Hotel, Beijing.

To celebrate the most auspicious occasion of the Chinese Lunar Calendar, *niangao*, a traditional festive dish made of glutinous rice, is available in shapes such as fish, rabbits and gold coins. Prices start from 178 yuan.

Packed in cloth-lined cases, gift baskets containing niangao, premium wine, health delicacies and other festive goodies make the perfect gifts. Prices start from 1,288 yuan.

For heartfelt family reunions this New Year, Executive Chef Lo invites guests to enjoy a range of set menus featuring Cantonese delicacies. Open for reservations this Thursday onwards, prices start at 888 yuan. Early Bird promotions are available with advance reservation.

Where: The Horizon Chinese Restaurant, Kerry Centre Hotel, 1 Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang District

Tel: 8565 2188

Event

Take the scent of Christmas home

The Christmas celebration in Sanlitun Village began with a light show and street performance last Wednesday. Through January 7, consumers who spend over a certain amount will receive a Christmas gift from the Scent Library, Demeter's flagship store in China.

A total same-day purchase of 500 yuan or more can get you a Margaret Josefin toothpaste set; at 2,000 yuan you receive Demeter's Snow perfume; at 5,000 yuan, a limited edition set from Australia's leading body care brand Mor.

Complete a raffle ticket for a chance to be one of five winners who will be refunded the entire cost of their shopping adventure, up to a maximum 4,999 yuan.

Where: Information centers of B1, the Village, 19 Sanlitun Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until January 7, 2011, 10 am – 8 pm
Tel: 6417 6110

(By Zhang Dongya)

Hotel



Hot winter deal at Grand Millennium Beijing

Plan a relaxing and festive break at the Grand Millennium Beijing with this fabulous deal! Enjoy favorable prices on various rooms. Normal rates include one daily breakfast. M Club Room prices include two daily breakfasts. Complimentary Internet service is available. These package offers cannot be used in conjunction with other hotel promotions and contract rates

Where: Grand Millennium Beijing, Fortune Plaza, 7 Dongsanhuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until March 6, 2011

Tel: 85876888

White Christmas at the Grand Ballroom

Be entertained by riveting performances by renowned cross-talkers Wang Yuebo and Ying Ning, celebrities Zheng Xulan, Yu Fei, a Sichuan face-changer, acrobats and the Dandelion School Christmas choir.

The grand finale will include a raffle with a grand prize trip for two to Sydney, Australia!

Enjoy a special rate of 688 yuan for a Deluxe room booked on December 24 and 25 for each ticket purchased.

Where: Kerry Centre Hotel, 1 Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang District

When: December 24

Cost: silver ticket price 3,888 yuan per person; gold ticket price 4,888 yuan per person

Tel: 6561 8833

Weekend offer

Look no further than China World Hotel, Beijing for a convenient downtown address during your weekend escapade in the capital city of China. Stay over the weekend and take in the city's top historical attractions, world-class shopping and dining opportunities and nightlife.

The offer includes a stay in a Superior Room starting from 1,500 yuan; a Deluxe Room starting from 1,700 yuan; a Horizon Deluxe Room starting from 1,850 yuan; a Premier Room starting from 2,150 yuan or an Executive Suite starting from 2,450 yuan.

Enjoy a complimentary buffet breakfast and broadband Internet access.

Where: China World Hotel, 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District

When: Until December 31

Tel: 6505 2266



798 Art Package

Explore the emerging artist in you at Traders Upper East Hotel, Beijing. Book a single or double Superior Room at 1,180 yuan per night and discover the magical history and artistry of colorful 798 Art District.

This offer includes a complimentary welcome drink; complimentary daily buffet breakfast at Cafe Noir; complimentary return transportation to the 798 Art District; one private lesson with a 798 painter and artist; an artist's kit; complimentary welcome dinner at Wulixiang Chinese restaurant; unlimited access to the fitness center, Jacuzzi, whirlpool and heated indoor swimming pool; and an upgrade to a Traders Club guestroom at 300 yuan. Enjoy additional exclusive benefits at Traders Club.

Where: Traders Hotels, 2 Dongsihuan Bei Lu, Chao-yang District

When: Until March 31, 2011

Cost: from 1,180 yuan per night

Tel: 5907 8888

Festivities' illumination

On December 1, Sofitel Wanda Beijing organized a Magic Tree Lighting Ceremony. This year Vous Lobby Lounge welcomed everybody with a wonderful children's choir, seasonal special drinks, holiday cookies and a mouthwatering 18-meter Christmas log cake. A five-meter Christmas tree was lit by the children from Bethel training center for the blind and Ian Alexandre, general manager of the Sofitel Wanda Beijing. The children cut the cake with the assistance of Sofitel volunteers and chefs. The cake took 150 hours to make using 16.2 kilograms of flour, 16 liters of milk, 36 kilograms of butter, 540 eggs, 25 kilograms of sugar and 18 kilograms of chocolate. Guests were given the chance to take home a piece.

Winter Warmer package

Come in out of the cold this winter with our exceptional Winter Warmer package at the Great Wall Sher-

aton Hotel Beijing. Escape the cold in one of the warm Deluxe Rooms, complete with the signature Sweet Sleeper Bed, and enjoy a hearty full buffet breakfast from 788 yuan for one person or 898 yuan for two persons per night.

The Executive Premier Room priced 1,288 or 1,528 yuan includes breakfast at the Executive Premier Floor Lounge; coffee, tea, juices, soft drinks and refreshments at the Executive Premier Floor Lounge; a cocktail at the Executive Premier Floor Lounge from 4 to 7 pm; up to four garment pressings per stay; high-speed Internet access and Wi-Fi; free local telephone calls; a meeting room upon availability, with the first two hours charge free in the Elite Floor meeting room; and personalized butler service.

The Executive Deluxe Room priced 1,088 or 1,328 yuan includes breakfast at Club Lounge; coffee, tea, juices, soft drinks and refreshments at Club Lounge; a cocktail at Club Lounge from 4 to 7 pm; up to four garment pressings per stay; free local telephone calls; a meeting room upon availability, a 50 percent discount for the first hours charged per stay in the Executive Floor meeting room; and personalized butler service

Where: Great Wall Sheraton Hotel Beijing, 10 Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until February 28, 2011

Tel: 6590 5566



Retreat to the Westin Executive Residences

The Westin is an apartment-style refuge with all the facilities and amenities of an award-winning hotel. The spacious apartments offer kitchens with imported appliances, the latest in entertainment systems, LCD TVs, oversized work desks and complimentary high-speed Internet; Westin signature products and services such as Service Express, Heavenly Bed, Westin WORKOUT, Heavenly Spa by Westin, rainforest shower and access to the Westin Kids Club.

Where: The Westin Beijing Financial Street, 9B Financial Street, Xicheng District

Cost: starting from 1,300 yuan (15 percent gratuity). Minimum 4-night stay required.

Tel: 6606 8866

(By Jackie Zhang)

Chinglish story

This column focuses on Chinglish mistakes in our daily life. If you have any experiences to share, send them to Wang Yu at wangyu2008@ynet.com.

Blacklist

This is a column of words or phrases commonly misused by Chinese speakers. If you're planning to be an English teacher, reporter or employee of a multinational company, then watch out for this page each week

Bluestocking not Julian Assange's type

By He Jianwei

In the past few weeks, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has been both glorified and demonized. To his fans, he is a hero crusader of truth; to his critics, he is a menace to international security.

By releasing secret information to the public, Assange has placed himself in the middle of a firestorm that involves this fundamental question: in the digital age, is there any such thing as truly "private" information?

Last weekend, Reddit.com disclosed what appears to be Assange's OkCupid dating profile, last accessed in 2006. There were pictures that appeared to be of Assange under the name Harry Harrison.

Some doubted the profile's authenticity, but others say the profile description sounds just like something Assange would write: "Passionate, and often pig headed activist intellectual seeks siren for love affair, children and occasional criminal conspiracy. Such a woman should be spirited and playful, of high intelligence, though not necessarily formally educated, have spunk, class and inner strength and be able to think strategically about the world and the people she cares about."

After I posted this on my microblog, my friend Ann Shu, who is a doctoral student in English literature and is still single in her 30s, left a message: "This is yet another piece of evidence that men don't like bluestockings."

"Don't be pedantic!" I replied. "I know you like people like yourself, those who are highly educated."

She sent me a blushing emoticon.

Truth is, I had only guessed at the meaning of "bluestocking." Ann must have known, because she called a few minutes later to explain the story behind the word.



The term, referring to a scholarly or intellectual woman, didn't mean exactly that 300 years ago. The first "bluestocking" was a man named Benjamin Stillingfleet, who was a botanist, translator, publisher and poet.

In the 18th century, it was informal to wear dark blue wool stockings, which was the equivalent of wearing jeans today. At that time, a group of independent-minded women began getting bored with embroidery and idle chatter, so they formed literary groups that gathered in the evenings, in the same

vein as established salons in Paris. They invited famous men of letters to join in their discussions.

Stillingfleet got an invitation, but he was too poor to afford the formal dress. The organizer told him to come in his informal clothes, so he wore his blue stockings. Lo and behold, it became a trend.

But the term had negative connotations under the pen of French artist Honore Daumier. He used the term to refer to women who were unfeminine, pedantic, humorless and self-important.

Chinglish on the way

This column aims to identify Chinglish in public areas. If you see any Chinglish signs, please send a picture of it to wangyu2008@ynet.com together with your name and address.

Uncomplimentary Gift-Giving

By Terry Boyd-Zhang

It is uncomplimentary to bring a contagious disease home for the holidays, for sure. Isn't "consumption" the disease Satine – Nicole Kidman's character in Moulin Rouge – died from? Well, according to this sign, if you have it, you will be charged for it.

Whether you brought it into the hotel with you or acquired it during your stay there doesn't seem to matter. It is better to submit to those frequent and somewhat random traveler health checks. I myself had three last year – that's right – three rounds of cancer-producing radiation and innumerable vials of blood drawn, and thus I can be fairly certain that I am clear.

Let's break down this sign. The middle character of the sign's title, *zeng*, means "free," and the last character is *pin*, or "stuff." The first character *fei* means "not." So, "not free stuff" is "uncomplimentary," so pay up for that

insult I paid you earlier!

Dear guest should be "honored guest" – a formal and polite tone is employed from the beginning; the last character, before the colon, is *ke*, meaning "guest." Then on the second line, *nin* is a polite way of saying "you,"

emphasizing how honored this hotel is to have had you. But wait! Consumption (see the character *pin* again?) will be charged to your room bill! It means if you consume something – eat it or use it – a charge will be added to your final bill.



1. The Great Wall was built mostly using stone, as opposed to bricks.

Professor Zhu Shida (ZS): At first sight, the sentence seems all right. However, if you come to analyze it, you will find the participle phrase is wrongly used. Let us first see another example: Flocks of sheep and cattle can be seen roaming the mountain slopes. We may dissect the sentence into two separate ones: Flocks of sheep and cattle can be seen and the sheep and cattle are roaming on the mountain slopes. If you apply this to the sample sentence, you will find that there is something logically wrong. The Great Wall was built. OK, that is right. But can the Great Wall be using stone? Obviously, the wall itself cannot do it on its own. So, the participle phrase has to be an adverbial of means, that is, The Great Wall was built by using stone, as opposed to bricks, or simply, The Great Wall was built with stone, as opposed to bricks.

Terry Boyd-Zhang (TBZ): It is very easy to write something you didn't mean. Let me share with you a quote from a recent student article: "As an actor, maybe nobody can be Jackie Chan. However, we should love our jobs. We can highlight them as 'bloopers' run during the end credits, the outtakes of dangerous pratfalls and sudden injuries and the van careening to the hospital like a clip from a police chase." I love it.

2. Whether they will ever come back is open to the question.

ZS: In English, the phrase "open to question" means that something is uncertain and still subject to further discussion. The sample sentence should be: Whether they will ever come back is open to question. We have another phrase relating to the word "question": in question. Please remember that it does not have the definite article before it either. It means under consideration or discussion; for instance: Congress debated the matter in question. It can also mean "in dispute"; for instance, Your loyalty is not in question, we all trust you completely. There is another similar phrase: "to call in question" which does not assume a definite article and means to dispute; challenge: He called my honor in question by suggesting that I have cheated on the test. In the case of the phrase "without question" (namely without a doubt) it does not assume a definite article either: He is without question the brightest student in the school.

TBZ: In order to use "open to the question," you need to add "of" and "THE question." When you use the article "the," it means that there is only one (for example, the biggest, the greatest, the hardest...). So, "The Prime Minister was open to the question of whether to continue talks with the bad guys or not." Possible, but better to keep it in the plural (without "the") as the professor has said. Such as, "The superstar was open to questions concerning his relationship with his hair-stylist."

3. The Ming Great Wall was kept its original appearance.

ZS: The problem with this sentence is that the writer is confused whether to use the active or the passive voice. This is a point where beginners have to be careful and are most liable to err. Though the Great Wall is not an animate thing, it can still keep its original appearance. So, the example sentence either should be: The Ming Great Wall still keeps its original appearance, or, The appearance of the Ming Great Wall is still well kept. Similarly, we may say: The school still retains its past dynamism, though it has tremendously expanded. You cannot by any means say: The school is still retained its past dynamism, though it has tremendously expanded. Do you see? You may put it in another way: The school's past dynamism is still retained though it has tremendously expanded.

TBZ: In my opinion, beginners had best master the active voice first, and basic verb tenses, before moving into the complexity of the passive voice. Even native speakers have trouble with it. And read, read, read! That will give one a feel for the language so one can "feel" whether it is right or not – a different "feel" than bar-talk on a Thursday night.

Movie of the week

Hollywood pretty boy Ben Affleck has long gone underestimated, locking him into a litany of handsome “average guy” roles. *The Town* might be a turning point for Affleck, who this time takes over the director's chair to make an excellent movie.

The movie is adapted from author Chuck Hogan's Hammett Prize-winning novel. The *Town* seems normal – at least at first glance. The plot seems common, the cinematography is uninspired and the actors are passable. But while no single feature stands out, together they make one fantastic picture.

Synopsis

Charlestown, Boston is famous for generations of armed robberies. For decades, families have remained trapped in a world where theft is the only way of life.

Doug MacRay, together with James Coughlin, Albert “Gloansy” Magloan and Desmond Elden, form the area's most notorious gang.

Doug and James treat each other like family – too much. Doug has a casual sexual relationship with James' single mother's sister, the drugged-out Krista Coughlin.

A successful bank heist finds Doug a new love interest in the form of bank manager Claire Keesey. But the FBI is already pressing Keesey for clues.



THE TOWN

Scene 1

(Doug and James wait in the living room of a drug dealer.)

Doug (D): Really done well for himself.

James (J): Yeah.

D: He got good money for that place in the town.

J: Why does anybody move to Saugus? It's gonna take us an hour to get over the Portagee Slide.

D: Yep.

J: Jesus.

D: This shit with the florist is getting old, man.

J: I'm investing in a marquee score (1). All right? So we gotta make a few payments.

D: Fuck making payments to him.

J: Hey, let me give you some advice.

Money don't care where it came from, all right?

D: The guy's a fucking Lucky Charms Irishman who can't find no one to sell his AKs to, so he's selling narcotics, trying to be the boss.

J: You didn't seem to care when you were dropping two grand a week on monsters and yay, did you?

D: Look, there's a difference between a dealer and a straight killer, all right?

J: So he dropped a few Dominicans. What, are you picky (2)?



Scene 2

(Doug and Claire talk in a restaurant.)

Claire (C): This is nice.

D: Yeah, it's a good place. A guy I played hockey with for a long time is one of the managers here.

C: Oh, yeah? That's nice. So, what do you do for work?

D: Boston Sand and Gravel. I break rocks. Punch a ticket at the end of the day slide down the back of a brontosaurus like *Fred Flintstone*.

Call it a night (3).

[Claire laughs]

C: Can I ask you something?

D: You sure can.

C: I volunteer at the Boys & Girls Club in Charlestown ...

D: Oh, yeah?

C: Yeah. As a kickball pitcher since they haven't been able to afford any ice for the rink.

D: Embarrassing. City won't put any money into that place.

C: Yeah, I know. Yeah, well, some of the kids were calling me a toonie ...

D: It just means a yuppie. Someone who's not from Charlestown, that's all.

C: Of course it does.

D: They're just being punks.

C: A yuppie.

D: Yeah.

C: So where does the word come from?

D: Uh ... It comes from back in the '90s, the toonies supplied all the tunes to Charlestown because once they moved in the townies stole all their car stereos. So all of a sudden, everyone in Charlestown had a Blaupunkt in their car, you know what I mean?

C: Anyway. So do your parents still live in Charlestown?

D: No. My mother moved away. My father lives out in the suburbs. Yeah. He doesn't get out much.

Scene 3

(FBI agent Frayley asks Claire out for lunch.)

Frawley (F): Why didn't you tell me you lived in Charlestown?

C: It's on my paperwork.

[Frawley checks his sandwich.]

C: You don't like your sandwich?

F: It's the unfortunate nagging suspicion you get as an FBI agent who has put a lot of neighborhood people in federal prison that someone may have violated your meal.

C: Come on, I don't think anyone would do that.

F: They throw Tom Fitz off the roof of Mishawum for cooperating and then stand around and taunt him while he drowned in his own

blood. So I don't think the lunch special is out of bounds (4).

C: OK.

F: They lionize criminals and complain about crime and I'm the bad guy. This place is one square mile. You walk into Lewisburg, there's a hundred townies in there.

C: Well, I think I'll skip Lewisburg.

F: Doesn't sound like a fun second date?

C: If I ask a question, will you give an honest answer?

F: It depends on the question.

C: Am I a suspect?

F: Would I ask you out if I thought you were a suspect?

C: I don't know. Would you?

F: Not if I wanted a conviction.

Vocabulary

1. **marquee score:** here it means a ball game

2. **picky:** giving careful attention to detail

3. **call it a night:** to stop early

4. **out of bounds:** here it means not possible

(By Wang Yu)